

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL 1, 1872.

WITHIN THE MAZE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE GATE OF THE MAZE.

A MORE charming place than Foxwood Court presented in the summer months when the rare and sweet flowers by which it was surrounded were in bloom, could not have been found in the Kentish county. The mansion was not very large, but it was exceedingly gay and pretty to look upon; a white building with a goodly number of large windows, those on the ground floor mostly opening to the ground, so that the terrace could be gained from the rooms at will. The terrace—a gravel walk with brilliant flower beds on either side it—ran along the front and the two sides of the house. A marble step or two in four places descended to a lower walk, or terrace, and from thence there was spread out the level lawn, a wide expanse, dotted with beds of flowers and bounded with groves of beautiful trees. The chief entrance to the house was in its centre: a pillared portico, surmounting a flight of steps that led down to the broad walk dividing the lawn. At the end of this walk between the bank of trees were the large iron gates and the lodge; and there were one or two small private gates of egress besides in the iron palisades that enclosed the grounds beyond the trees. If there was a fault to be found with the locality altogether, it perhaps was that it had too many trees about it.

The iron gates opened upon a broad highway: but one that from circumstances, now to be explained, was not much used, except by visitors to Foxwood Court. To the left of the gates a winding road led to the village of Foxwood; it lay in front, distant about a quarter of a mile. To the right the road went straight to the little railway station: but as

there was also a highway from the village to the station direct, cutting off all the round by Foxwood Court, it will readily be understood why that part of the road was rarely used. In the village of Foxwood there were a few good and a few poor houses ; some shops ; a church and parsonage, the incumbent an elderly man named Sumnor ; Mr. Moore the surgeon ; and a solicitor, Mr. St. Henry, who was universally called in the place Lawyer St. Henry. Some good mansions were scattered about in the vicinity ; and it was altogether a favoured and attractive neighbourhood.

In a small but very pretty room of Foxwood Court, at the side of the house that looked towards the railway station, sat Mrs. Cleeve and Miss Blake at breakfast. It was a warm and lovely June morning. The table, set off with beautiful china from the Worcester manufactories, with silver plate, and with a glass of choice flowers, was drawn close to the window, whose doors were wide open. By Mrs. Cleeve's hand lay a letter just received from her daughter, Lady Andinnian, saying that she and Karl were really commencing their journey home.

But for interference how well the world might get on ! After Karl Andinnian quitted Foxwood to rejoin his wife in London—as was related previously—Lucy had so far regained her health and strength that there was really no need for her to go, as had been arranged, to another climate. She herself wished not to go, but to take up her abode at once at Foxwood Court, and Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve seeing her so well, said they would prefer that she should remain in England. Karl, however, ruled it otherwise ; and to the Continent he went with his wife. Then Miss Blake took up the tale and the interference. Somewhat of love still, anger, and jealousy rankled in her heart against Karl Andinnian. Anything she could say against him she did say : and she contrived to impress Mrs. Cleeve with a notion that he, in a sort, had kidnapped Lucy and was taking her abroad for some purposes of his own. She boldly averred that Sir Karl had been *keeping* his wife away from Foxwood by statements of the fever, and such like, false and plausible : and that he probably meant to hide her away from them in some remote place for ever.

This served to startle Mrs. Cleeve—though she only half believed it. She wrote to Sir Karl, saying that both herself and the Colonel wished to see Lucy home, and begged of him to return and take up his abode at Foxwood. Karl replied that Foxwood was not ready for them ; there was no establishment. Mrs. Cleeve wrote again—urging that she and Theresa should go down and engage two or three servants, just enough to receive himself and Lucy : afterwards they could take on more at will. A few days' delay and Karl's second answer came. He thanked Mrs. Cleeve for the trouble she offered to take, and accepted it : specifying a wish that the servants should be natives of the locality—and who had always lived in it.

"Sir Karl wishes to employ his poor neighbours," observed Mrs. Cleeve. "You must see that he is right, Theresa."

Theresa could find no cause to confute this much. But she was more and more persuaded that Sir Karl would have kept Lucy away from Foxwood if he could. And we must admit that it looked like it.

Mrs. Cleeve lost no time in going down with Miss Blake to Foxwood Court. Hewitt, who had been left in charge, with an elderly woman, received them. They thought they had never seen a more respectable or thoroughly efficient retainer. The gardeners were the only other servants employed. They lived out of doors: the chief one, Maclean, inhabiting the lodge with his wife.

While Miss Blake was looking out for some young women servants, two or three of whom were speedily found and engaged, she made it her business to look also after the village and its inhabitants. That Miss Blake had a peculiar faculty for searching out information, was indisputable: never a better one for the task than she: and when an individual is gifted with this quality in a remarkable degree, it has to be more or less exercised. Miss Blake might have been a successful police detective: attached to a private inquiry office she would have made its fortune.

And, what she learnt, gave her a profound contempt for Foxwood. We are speaking of the place now; not the Court. In the first place there was no church: or at least what Miss Blake chose to consider none. The vicar, Mr. Sumnor, set his face against views of an extreme kind, and that was enough for Miss Blake to wage war with. Old Sumnor, to sum him up in Miss Blake's words, might be conscientious enough, but he was as slow as a tortoise. She attended his church the first Sunday, and found it unbearably tame. There were no candles or flowers or banners or processions: and there was no regular daily service held. Miss Blake thought one might as well be without breakfast and dinner. Foxwood was a benighted place, and nothing less.

Mr. Sumnor's family consisted of an invalid daughter left him by his first wife; a second wife and two more daughters. Mrs. Sumnor kept him in subjection, and her two daughters were showy and fast young ladies. The surgeon, Mr. Moore, a widower, had four blooming girls, and a sister, Aunt Diana, a kind of strong-minded female, who took care of them. The young ladies were pretty, but common-place. As to the lawyer, St. Henry, he had no children of his own, but had taken to a vast many of his dead brother's. There were many other young ladies in the vicinity; but it was an absolute fact that there were no gentlemen—husbands and fathers of families excepted; for the few sons that existed were gone out to make their way in the world. Miss Blake considered it not at all a desirable state of things, and accorded it her cool contempt. But the place showed itself friendly, and came flocking in its simple manners and hearty good will to see the Hon.

Mrs. Cleeve, Lady Andinnian's mother, and to ask what it could do for her. So that Miss Blake, whether she liked it or not, soon found herself on terms of sociability with Foxwood.

One morning an idea dawned upon her that seemed like a ray from heaven. Conversing with the Misses St. Henry, those ladies—gushing damsels with enough brown hair on their heads to make a decent sized hayrick, and in texture it was nearly as coarse as hay—informed her confidentially that they also considered the place benighted in the matter of religion. Often visiting an aunt in London—whose enviable roof-top was cast within the shadow of a high ritualistic establishment, boasting of great hourly doings and five charming curates, it might readily be imagined the blight that fell upon them when doomed to return to Foxwood Church and plain old Sumnor: and they breathed a devout wish that a church after their own hearts might be established at Foxwood. This was the ray of light that flashed upon Miss Blake. She started at its brightness. A new church at Foxwood! If the thing were possible to be accomplished, *she* would accomplish it. The Rev. Guy Cattacomb, what with prejudiced bishops and old-world clergymen, did not appear to be appreciated according to his merits, and had not yet found any field for his views and services. Miss Blake was in occasional correspondence with him, and knew this. From being a kind of dead-and-alive creature under the benighting torpidity of Foxwood, Miss Blake leaped at once into an energetic woman. An object was given her: and she wrote a long letter to Mr. Cattacomb telling him what it was. This morning his answer had been delivered to her.

She chirped to the birds as she sat at breakfast: she threw them crumbs out at the window. Mrs. Cleeve was quitting Foxwood that day, but hoped to be down again soon after Sir Karl and her daughter reached it.

"You are sure, Theresa, you do not mind being left alone here?" cried Mrs. Cleeve, eating her poached egg.

But Theresa, buried in her own active schemes, and in the letter she had just had from Mr. Cattacomb—though she did not mention aloud the name of the writer—neither heard nor answered. Mrs. Cleeve spoke again.

"Mind being left here? Oh dear no, I shall like it. I hated the place the first few days, but I am quite reconciled to it now."

"And you know exactly what there is to do for the arrival of Sir Karl and Lucy, Theresa?"

"Why of course I do, Mrs. Cleeve. There's Hewitt, too: he is a host in himself."

Breakfast over, Miss Blake, as was customary, went out. Having no daily service to take up her time, she hardly knew how to employ it. Mr. Cattacomb's letter had told her that he should be most happy to

come to officiate at Foxwood if a church could be provided for him : the difficulty presenting itself to Miss Blake's mind was—that there was no church to provide. As Miss Blake had observed to Jane St. Henry only yesterday, she knew they might just as well ask the Dean of Westminster for his abbey, as old Sumnor for his church, or the minister for his Dissenting chapel opposite the horse-pond.

Revolving these slight drawbacks in her brain, Miss Blake turned to the right on leaving the gates. Generally speaking she had gone the other way, towards the village. This road was more solitary. On one side of it were the iron palisades and the grove of trees that shut in Foxwood ; on the other was a tall hedge and another grove of trees behind it. A little farther on, this tall hedge had a gate in its middle, high and strong, whose bars of iron were so closely constructed that it would not have been well possible for ill-intentioned tramps to mount it. The gate stood back a little, the road winding in just there, and was much shut in by trees outside as well as in. Opposite the gate, over the road, stood a pretty red-brick cottage villa, with green venetian outside shutters, creeping clematis around its parlour windows, and the rustic porch between them. It was called Clematis Cottage, and may be said to have joined the confines of Foxwood Court, there being only a narrow side-lane between, which led to the Court's stables and back premises. Miss Blake had before noticed the cottage and noticed the gate : she had wondered in her ever-active curiosity who occupied the one ; she had wondered whether any dwelling was enclosed within the other. This morning as she passed, a boy stood watching the gate, his hands in his pockets and whistling to a small dog which had contrived to get its one paw into the gate and seemed to be in a difficulty as to getting it back again. Miss Blake, after taking a good look at Clematis Cottage, crossed the road ; and the boy, in rustic politeness, turned his head and touched his shabby cap.

"Where does this gate lead to ?" she asked. "To any house ?"

"Yes, 'um," replied the boy, whose name, as he informed Miss Blake, was Tom Pepp. "It's the Maze."

"The Maze," she repeated, thinking the name had an odd sound.

"Do you mean that it is a house, boy ?—a dwelling place ?"

"It be that, 'um, sure enough. Old Mr. Throcton used to live in't. Folks said he was crazy."

"Why is it called the Maze ?"

"It *is* a maze," said the boy, patting his dog, which had at length got loose. "See that there path, 'um"—pointing to the one close within the gate—"and see them there trees ayont it ?"

Miss Blake looked over the path at the trees. They extended on all sides farther than she could see. Thick, clustering trees, and shrubs full of leafy verdure, with what looked like innumerable paths amidst them.

"That's the maze," said the boy, "and the place is called after it. Once get among them there trees, 'um, and you'd never get out again with-

out the clue. The house is in the middle on't; a space cleared out, with a goodish big garden and grass-plot. I've been in three or four times when old Mr. Throcton lived there."

"Did you get in through the maze?" asked Miss Blake.

"Yes, 'um; there ain't no other way. 'Twere always along of mother; she knowed the housekeeper. The man servant he'd take us through the trees all roundabout and bring us out again."

"Where does this path lead to?" was the next question, speaking of the one inside between the maze and the gate.

"He goes round and round and round again," was the lucid answer. "I've heard say that a door in it leads right to the house, but nobody can find the door save them that know it."

"What an extraordinary place!" exclaimed Miss Blake, much impressed with the narration. "One would think smugglers lived there—or people of that kind."

The boy's eyes—and intelligent eyes they were—went up to Miss Blake's. He did not particularly understand what a smuggler might be, but felt sure it could not apply to Mr. Throcton.

"Mr. Throcton was a rich gentleman that had always lived here," he said. "There warn't nothing wrong with him—only a bit crazy. For years afore he died, 'um, he'd never see nobody; and the house, mother said, were kept just like a prison."

Miss Blake, very curious, looked at the lock and tried to shake the gate. She might as well have tried to shake the air.

"Who lives in it now, Tom Pepp?"

"A young lady, 'um."

"A young lady?" echoed Miss Blake. "Who else?"

"Not nobody else," said the boy.

"Why, you don't mean to say a young lady lives alone there?"

"She do, 'um. She and a old servant or two."

"Is she married or single?"

Tom Pepp could not answer the last question. Supposed, now he came to think of it, she must be single, as no husband was there. He did not know her name.

"What is she like?" asked Miss Blake.

"I've never see'd her," said Tom Pepp. "I've never see'd her come out, and never see'd nobody go in but the butcher's boy. He don't go in neither. He rings at the gate and waits there till they come to him."

"Well, it must be a very lively place for a young lady!" mentally observed Miss Blake with sarcasm. "She must want to hide herself from the world."

"Mother see'd her at church once with her veil up. She'd never see'd nothing like her so pretty at Foxwood."

Turning to pursue her walk, Tom Pepp, who worked for Farmer Truefit, and who was in fact playing truant for half an hour and thought

it might be policy not to play it any longer, turned also, the farm lying in that direction. At that moment, Miss Blake, happening to cast her eyes across the road, saw the head and shoulders of a gentleman stretched out of one of the sash windows of Clematis Cottage, evidently regarding her attentively.

"Who is that gentleman, Tom Pepp?"

"Him! Well now, what did I hear his name was again?" returned the lad, considering. "Smith. That's it. It's Mr. Smith, 'um. He be a stranger to the place, and come here just afore Mrs. Andinnian died. It's said he was some friend of her'n."

"Rather a curious person, that Mrs. Andinnian, was she not?" remarked Miss Blake, invited to gossip by the intelligence of the boy.

"I never see'd her," was the reiteration. "I've never yet see'd the new master o' Foxwood, Sir Karl Andinnian. It's said Sir Karl is coming home himself soon," added the boy; "him and his lady. Hope he'll be as good for the place as Sir Joseph was."

They passed on: the opposite gentleman's eyes following Miss Blake: of which she was quite conscious. Soon they came to the road on the left hand that led direct to the village. Miss Blake glanced down it, but continued her walk straight onwards, as if she had a mind to go on to the railway station. Casting her eyes this way and that, she was attracted by a pile of ruins on the other side the road, with what looked like a kind of modern room amidst them.

"Why, what's that?" she cried to Tom Pepp, standing still to gaze.

"Oh, them be the ruins, 'um," answered Tom Pepp. "It had used to be the chapel belonging to the grey friars at the monastery."

"What friars?—what monastery?" eagerly returned Miss Blake, much interested.

The friars were dead years ago, and the monastery had crumbled to pieces, and Mr. Truefit's farm was built upon where it used to stand, was the substance of the boy's answer, delivered in terrible fright, for he caught sight of his master, Mr. Truefit, at a distance.

Miss Blake glanced at the farmhouse, which lay back beyond the first field. "Surely they have not desecrated sacred ruins by putting up a barn amidst them!" she exclaimed, as she crossed the road to explore. There were half-crumbled walls around, part of an ivied stone block that she thought must have been the basement of a spire, and other fragments.

"It's not a barn," said Tom Pepp: "never was one. They mended some o' the old walls a few years ago, and made it into a school-room, and the children went to school in it—me for one. Not for long, though. Lady Andinnian and Sir Joseph—it was more her than him—fell out with Parson Sumnor and the trusts; and my lady said the children shouldn't never come to it again. After that, the trusts built 'em a school-room in the village; and 'twas said Sir Joseph sent 'em a five-

hunderd pound in a letter and never writ a word to tell where it come from. He was a good man, he was, when my lady 'ud let him be."

Miss Blake did not hear half: she was lost in an idea that had taken possession of her, as she gazed about inside the room. It was narrow and not very long, with bare white-washed walls and rafters above, the windows on either side being very high up.

"If this place was the chapel in the old times, it must have been consecrated!" cried she, breathlessly.

"Very like, 'um," was the lad's answer, in blissful ignorance of her meaning. "Them grey friars used to eat their meals in it, I've heard tell, and hold jollifications."

Preoccupied, the sinful insinuation escaped Miss Blake. The conviction that this consecrated place would be the very thing needed for Mr. Cattacomb's church was working in her brain. Tom Pepp was ensconced in a dark corner, his dog in his arms, devoutly hoping his master would not come that way till he had made his escape. The ruins belonged to Farmer Truefit, the boy said. The fact being that they stood on the land the farmer rented; which land was part of the Andinnian estate.

"Has nothing been done with the room since it was used for the school?" asked Miss Blake.

"Nothing," was the boy's reply. It was kept locked up until Lady Andinnian's death: since then, nobody, so far as he knew, had taken notice of it.

"What a beautiful little chapel it will make!" thought Miss Blake. "And absolutely there's a little place that will do for a vestry! I'll lose no time."

She went off straight to an interview with Mr. Truefit; which was held in the middle of a turnip-field. The farmer, a civil man, stout and sturdy, upon hearing that she was a relative of his new landlord's wife, the young Lady Andinnian, and was staying at Foxwood Court, took off his hat and gave her leave to do what she liked to the room and to make it into a place of worship if she pleased: his idea being that it was to be a kind of Methodist chapel, or mission-room.

This sublime idea expanding within her mind, Miss Blake walked back to Foxwood—for Mrs. Cleeve was to depart at midday. In passing the Maze, the interest as to what she had heard induced her to go close up to the gate again, and peer in. Turning away after a good long look, she nearly ran against a rather tall gentleman, who was slowly sauntering along through the trees outside the gate. A gentleman in green spectacles, with a somewhat handsome face and black whiskers—the same face and whiskers, Miss Blake thought, that had watched her from the opposite window. He wore grey clothes, had one black glove on and his arm in a sling.

Mr. Smith took off his hat and apologised. Miss Blake apologised.

Between them they fell into conversation. She found him a very talkative, pleasant man.

"Curious place, the Maze?" he echoed in answer to a remark of Miss Blake's. "Well, yes, I suppose it may be called so, as mazes are not very common."

"I have been told a young lady lives in it alone."

"I believe she does. In fact, I know it, for I have seen her."

"Oh, have you!" cried Miss Blake, more curiously than ever.

"When I went to receive the premium for Sir Karl Andinnian—due on taking the house," quietly explained Mr. Smith.

"And who is she?"

"She is a Mrs. Grey."

"Oh—a married woman."

"Certainly. A single lady, young as she is, would scarcely be living entirely alone."

"But where is her husband?"

"Travelling, I believe. I understood her to say so."

"She is quite young then?"

"Quite."

"Is she good-looking?" continued Miss Blake.

"I have rarely seen any one so pretty."

"Indeed! What a strange thing that she should be hiding herself in this retired place!"

"Do you think so? It seems to me to be just the spot a young lady might select, if obliged to live apart for a time from her husband."

"Of course, there's something in that," conceded Miss Blake. "Does she visit at all in the neighbourhood?"

"I think not. I am sure not. If she did I should see her go in and out. She takes a walk occasionally, and sometimes goes to church on Sundays. But she mostly keeps in her shell, guarded by her two old domestics."

In talking, they had crossed the road, and now halted again at the little gate of Clematis Cottage. Miss Blake asked if he knew anything about the ruins she had noticed further up: and Mr. Smith (who had introduced himself to her by name in a light, gentlemanly manner) said he did not, but he had a book of the locality indoors which he would refer to, if she would do him the honour of stepping into his little drawing-room.

Rather fascinated by his courteous attentions, Miss Blake did so: and thought what a bright-looking, pretty drawing-room it was. The gentleman took off his green glasses (casually mentioning that he wore them out of doors as a protection against the light), and searched for the guide-book. The book, however, was chiefly a book of roads, and said very little more of the monastery and the ruins than Miss Blake had heard from Tom Pepp.

"You have hurt your arm," she at length ventured to observe, as he slowly drew it once or twice out of the sling, and seemed to use it with trouble. "Any accident?"

"An accident of long standing, madam. But the arm continues weak, and always will continue so, next door to useless; and I wear the sling for protection."

Miss Blake took her departure; the gentleman escorting her to the garden gate with much ceremony. In fact, it almost seemed as though he wished to make a favourable impression on her.

"He is a gallant man," was Miss Blake's mental comment—"and a well-informed and pleasant one. I wonder who he is?"

But her thoughts, veering round to many other matters, at length settled themselves upon the Maze and its young lady inmate. They quite took hold of her mind and held possession of it, even to the partial exclusion of Mr. Cattacomb and the promising ruins.

In later days, Miss Blake said this must have been nothing less than instinct.

CHAPTER XII.

TAKING AN EVENING STROLL.

MISS BLAKE carried her point. In a very short space of time the little way-side room in the ruins—call it chapel, school-room, barn, what you will—was converted into a church and styled "St. Jerome." Setting to work at once with a will, Miss Blake had left not a stone unturned to accomplish her purpose. She pressed several of the young ladies in the village into the service. Nothing loth, they. Having heard of the divers merits of the Reverend Guy Cattacomb, they could but be desirous so shining a light should be secured amidst them. Miss Blake herself brought all her rare energy, her unflagging perseverance to the task. When she took a cause to heart, no woman was so indomitable as she. As may readily be supposed, a good deal had to be done to the room before it could be made what was wanted; but contrivance worked wonders. All the money Miss Blake could spare she freely applied: it was not sufficient, and she wrote to sundry friends, begging contributions. She next went, with Miss St. Henry and Miss Moore, to some of the houses in the vicinity, to every one where it might be safe to go, asking for aid. This personal canvass was not always successful. Some professed not to understand why a second church was required, and gave shillings instead of pounds. One old lady, however, had her generous instincts so worked upon by the eloquence of Miss Blake (as much as she could hear of it, for she was very deaf, and her companion declared afterwards that she believed all the while she was giving to a new industrial school possessing a resident chaplain) that she handed over a cheque for fifty guineas. Miss Blake could not believe her eyes when she saw it: and she assured the old lady that every blessing of heaven

would be showered down on her in return. Miss Blake's personal friends also contributed well—and the matter was accomplished. Not only was the chapel itself set up, but the stipend of Mr. Cattacomb assured for the first few months. To do Miss Blake justice, she wished all things to be right, and she never entertained a doubt that the place had once been duly consecrated. Her whole heart was in the work—always excepting a slight small corner of it that was still filled with her wrongs and Karl Andinnian.

The early afternoon sun shone down on the bright flowers, the well kept lawns of Foxwood Court, as Miss Blake stepped out of one of its windows, her walking costume perfect. She was always well dressed: but to-day her toilette was more elaborate than usual. Standing for a moment to look around at the beautiful place, at its complete order, there rose up in her heart one wild, angry thought—But for Lucy, this would have been my own. A very mistaken assumption on Miss Blake's part; but who was to tell her so? Banishing the thought resolutely, she walked along at a brisk pace, as if running a race with time. It was a great day this. Two events were coming off in it that stirred Miss Blake to the core. The Reverend Mr. Cattacomb was expected by the four o'clock train; and Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian would arrive at home for dinner.

Miss Blake took the way to St. Jerome's Church, a very choice bouquet of hot-house flowers in her hand. Glancing at the gate of the Maze—in regard to which place her interest had not in the least abated—she bore onwards, and soon joined some groups of ladies, who were advancing to St. Jerome's by the more direct route from the village. They had appointed to meet that afternoon and put the finishing touches to the room ere it should be seen by its pastor—if indeed any touches remained to be done. A matter such as this could not but have excited much comment at Foxwood ever since the first day that Miss Blake took it in hand. Prudent mothers, full of occupation themselves, warned their daughters against being “led away.” The daughters, whose hands were idle, rushed to the new attraction, stealthily at first, openly afterwards. They grew to be as energetic as Miss Blake herself, and were in a fervour of eagerness for the arrival of Mr. Cattacomb.

Miss Blake opened the door and allowed the rest to file in. She stayed looking at something that did not please her—a wheelbarrow full of earth lodging right against St. Jerome's outside walls.

“I should not wonder but it's that Tom Pepp who has left it there!” said Miss Blake severely. “The boy is for ever dodging about here—and brings other boys in his train. When Mr. Cattacomb——”

“Good afternoon, madam!”

Miss Blake turned sharply, and recognized Mr. Smith—his green spectacles on and his arm in a sling as usual. She had seen him once or twice since that first meeting, but he had only bowed in passing.

"May I be permitted to enter?" he asked, waving his hand at the church-door.

"Oh certainly," she replied. "Indeed I hope you will become one of St. Jerome's constant worshippers."

It certainly looked a sweet little place—as Jane St. Henry remarked aloud. Candles, flowers, crosses, scrolls—for Miss Blake knew exactly what would please Mr. Cattacomb. The common white-washed walls were nearly hidden: mottoes, a painting or two, and prints lay thickly on them, all of course of a sacred character. The plain, segged-seated chairs stood pretty thickly. The other arrangements were as good as funds, time, and space had allowed. Leading off on one side at the upper end, was a small vestry; with a sort of corner box in it that was to serve as a confessional. This vestry—which used to be the place where the school children put their hats and bonnets—had an objectionable window in it; before which was hung a blind of printed calico, securing the vestry's privacy from sun and gazers.

Mr. Smith might have been a travelled man, but in all his travels he had seen no place of worship like unto this. He was saying so to himself as he turned and gazed about through his green glasses.

"Is it not charming, sir?" asked Jane St. Henry.

"It is rather small," was the response.

"Oh, that's the worst," said the young lady. "One cannot have everything at the beginning: there must always be some drawbacks. I know a church in London, not very much larger than this, where there are three sweet little private sanctuaries: here we have only one."

"Sanctuaries?" repeated the agent, evidently not understanding.

"Confessionals. For confession you know. We have only one here, and that is obliged to be in the vestry."

"Oh, then the place *is* Roman Catholic!" said Mr. Smith, quietly. "I thought so."

He had no intention to offend: it was what he inferred: but Miss St. Henry gave a little shriek and put her two hands to her ears. Martha Sumnor, a free, showy girl, stepped up.

"For goodness sake don't call it that," she said. "Papa would go on at us for coming here worse than he does."

Mr. Smith bowed and begged pardon. He could not help thinking this was a daughter of the vicar of the old church, but was not sure: and he wondered much.

Even so. The two daughters of Mr. Sumnor had joined St. Jerome's. They and their mother had long set the vicar at defiance.

Foxwood was deemed to be a particularly healthy place: in the summer months invalids were wont to resort to it from the neighbouring town of Basham. To meet requirements, lodgings being scarce, a row of houses had been run up in the heart of the village, near where the old pound used to stand. They were called Paradise Row. Very pretty

to look at ; perhaps not quite so good to wear : stuccoed white fronts outside, lath and plaster within. If the door of one banged, the whole of the houses shook ; and the ringing of a sitting-room bell was heard right and left throughout the Row.

It was in the middle house of these favoured dwellings, No. 5, kept by Mrs. Jinks, that the ladies had secured apartments for the Rev. Guy Cattacomb. The bow-windowed front parlour, and the bed-room behind it. Mrs. Jinks, familiarly called by her neighbours and friends the Widow Jinks, was beyond the middle age—to speak politely—with a huge widow's cap nearly as black as the chimney, and a huge black bonnet generally tilted on the top of it. She had deemed herself very lucky to find her rooms taken by the ladies for the new clergyman, boasting to her neighbours that it was of course a "pernament let : " but before the clergyman arrived, she had grown somewhat out of conceit of the "let," so worried was she by the young ladies. Parties of them always calling, bringing this, that, and the other for the comfort of their expected pastor, and calling the Widow Jinks to the door a dozen times in a day.

Upon leaving St. Jerome's this afternoon, they went in a body to Paradise Row, intending to await the advent of the Reverend Guy, and to see that butter and other essentials had been got in for him. Miss Blake could have dispensed with so large a party—but what was she to do ? All the way to the house they had been talking of Mr. Smith ; wondering who he was and why he had come to live at Foxwood. Miss St. Henry at length remembered to have heard he was a friend of the Andinnian family, and had been looking after things as agent during the absence of Sir Karl.

"An agent !" exclaimed Miss Blake, drawing herself up.

"Not a common agent, of course. Does what he does out of friendship. Here we are."

"Oh, that's very different," returned Miss Blake, giving a loud, long, important knock at the Widow Jinks's door.

"Well, that *is* a shame of old Jinks !" cried Jemima Moore, in an undertone to the rest as they got into the parlour.

For the Widow Jinks had not deemed it necessary to smarten herself up to receive her new lodger. She answered the door in her ordinary working costume : rusty black gown, cap, and bonnet. Her face and hands were black too, as if she had been disturbed in cleaning the pots and kettles.

"She ought to be told of it. And did you see how sour she looked ?"

Miss Blake put the beautiful bouquet of hot-house flowers—which she had been guarding carefully—into a vase of water, for it was for Mr. Cattacomb they had been destined. Some light refreshment in the shape of wine and cake stood on the table ; and Mrs. Jinks was examined as

to other preparations. All was in readiness, and the ladies waited with impatience.

An impatience that subsided into doubt, and that into disappointment. The clock had gone ticking on; the train must have been in long ago, and it became evident Mr. Cattacomb had not come. Miss Blake walked home slightly vexed: and there she found Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian.

Things often go cross and contrary. They had not been expected until later, and Miss Blake had intended to preside—if it may be called so—at both arrivals. As it happened, she had been at neither. It was in crossing the lawn, that Lucy, radiant, blooming, joyous, ran out to meet her.

“Good gracious!” cried Miss Blake.

“Oh Theresa! how beautiful and happy everything is!” cried the young wife, pushing back her bonnet to give and take the kiss of greeting. “Karl has been showing me the rooms. Hewitt said you would not be long.”

“But when did you come, Lucy?”

“Oh, we came by the four o’clock train, and took a fly. Here’s my husband. Karl, do you see Theresa?”

Karl was coming down the terrace steps to greet her. Miss Blake advanced coldly.

“How do you do, Sir Karl?”—and the hand she put into his, seemed limp and cold. *He* did not look blooming, but worn, ill, and depressed.

They entered the hall together, the rays from the coloured windows shining on them and on the tessellated floor, lighting all up with a cheerful brightness. The reception-rooms were on either side the hall: they were what Sir Karl had been showing to his wife. Lucy declared it was the prettiest house she was ever in.

“I like this room better than any of the grand ones,” spoke Miss Blake, leading to the little north room she generally sat in, where we saw her breakfasting with Mrs. Cleeve.

“It shall be called your room then, Theresa,” said Lucy. “Oh yes, it is very pretty,” she continued, looking at the light paper, flecked with gold, the light furniture with its crimson satin coverings, the various tasty objects scattered about, and the glass doors, wide open to the terrace, the blushing and sweet flowers, and the smooth lawn beyond.

“I believe this was the late Lady Andinnian’s favourite room,” observed Karl.

“Let me see,” said Lucy, stepping outside, “this must look towards the railway station. Oh yes; and Foxwood lies the other way.”

Opposite to this window some steps descended to the lawn from the terrace. In very lightness of heart, she ran down and up them. Karl was talking to Miss Blake.

"There's a room answering to this in size and position on the other side the house; as of course you know," he observed. "Sir Joseph, I hear, made it his ——"

"Hewitt calls it Sir Karl's room, now," interrupted Miss Blake. "You smoke in it, don't you, Sir Karl?"

"I did smoke in it once or twice when I was staying down here during the time of my mother's illness," he replied. "But I am not a great smoker. Just one cigar at night; and not always that."

"Did I see that room, Karl?" asked his wife.

"No. It was hardly worth showing you, Lucy."

"Oh but I shall like it better than all the rest if it's yours."

"Come and see it then."

She put her arm within his, and he looked down on her with a smile as they went along through the house. Miss Blake walked behind, with drawn-in lips. Sir Karl was greatly altered in manner, she thought; all his life and spirits had left him: and he did not seem in the least glad to see *her*.

The room on the other side had grey walls and looked altogether rather dowdy. Books and maps were on the shelves, a large ink-stand stood on the table, and the chimney-piece was ornamented with a huge chinese tobacco-box.

"Now, Karl, that great arm chair shall be yours, and this little one mine," said Lucy. "And you must let me come in when I please—although I can see it is to be your business-room."

"As often as you will, my darling."

He threw open the glass doors as he spoke, stepped across the terrace, and down the steps to the lawn—for this room answered in every respect to the other. This room faced the south; the front of the house the west, and Miss Blake's favourite room the north. The sun came slantwise across the flower beds. Sir Karl plucked one of the sweetest roses, and brought it to his wife. Lucy said nothing as she took it; but Miss Blake, observant Miss Blake, saw the lingering touch of their hands; the loving glance from Lucy's eyes to his.

"Shall I show you your rooms upstairs, Lady Andinnian? If you have not been up."

"Thank you, I'll take Lucy myself," said Karl. "No, we have not been up."

The rooms they were to occupy lay in front, towards the northern end of the corridor. The bed-room was large and beautifully fitted up. Just now Aglaé had it in a litter, unpacking. Two dressing-rooms opened from it. Sir Karl's on the right—the last room at that end; Lucy's on the left: and beyond Lucy's was another bed-room. These four rooms all communicated with each other: when their doors stood open you might see straight through all of them: each one could also be entered from the corridor.

"But what do we want with this second bed-room?" asked Lucy, as she stood in it with her husband.

A full minute elapsed before he answered her, for it was the room where that strange communication, which was o'ershadowing his life, had been made to him by his mother. The remembrance of the night and its startling disclosures was very present with him, and he turned to the window and put his head out, as though gasping for a breath of air.

"They have not made any change, you see, Lucy: I did not give orders. It was my mother's chamber during her short span of residence here. The next, that little dressing-room of yours, she made her upstairs sitting-room. Perhaps you would like to have this made into a sitting-room for yourself."

"Nay, Karl, if I want to sit upstairs, there's my dressing-room. We will let this be as it is. Is that Foxwood?" she added, pointing to the roofs of houses and a church-spire in the distance.

"Yes, that's Foxwood."

"And what are all those trees over the way?" turning her finger rather towards the right: in fact to the Maze. "There are some chimneys amidst them. Is it a house?"

"Yes."

"A gentleman's house? It must be pleasant to have neighbours so near, if they are nice people. Is it occupied, Karl?"

"I—I fancy so. The truth is, Lucy,"—breaking into rather a forced laugh—"that I am as yet almost as much of a stranger here as yourself. Shall I call Aglaé? I'm sure you must want to get your bonnet off."

"Aglaé's there, you know; I am going to her. But first of all—" clasping her arms fondly round him and lifting her sweet face to his—"let me thank you for this beautiful home. Oh, Karl! how happy we shall be in it."

"God willing!" he answered in a beseeching tone of exquisite pain. And, as he held her to him in the moment's tenderness, his chest heaved with a strange emotion.

"How he loves me," thought Lucy, passing to her own rooms. For she put the emotion down to that. "I wonder if there ever was such love before in the world as his and mine? Aglaé, I must wear white to-day."

She went down to dinner in white muslin and white ribbons, with a lily in her hair, a very bride to look at. Poor girl! it was a gala-day with her, this coming home, almost like her wedding-day. Poor wife!

The only one to talk much at dinner was Lucy. Miss Blake was not in one of her amiable moods: Sir Karl and Lucy had both dressed for dinner; she had not, not supposing they would, and that helped to put her out. Karl was silent and grave as usual, just like a man preoccupied. His wife had become used to his air of sadness. She set it down, partly

to the cause of the mysterious communication he had made to her the night before their marriage, and which had never since been mentioned between them, and partly to his ill-fated brother's trouble and shocking death. Therefore Lucy took the sadness as a matter of course and never would appear to notice it.

Miss Blake spoke of St. Jerome's : telling with much exultation all that had been done. But Sir Karl looked grave. The good sound doctrines and worship of what used to be called High-Church were his own : but he did not like these new and extreme movements that caused scandal.

"You say that this St. Jerome's is on my land, Miss Blake?"

"On your land, Sir Karl : but in Farmer Truefit's occupation. The consent lay with him and he gave it."

"Well, I hope you will have the good sense not to go too far."

Miss Blake lifted her head, and asked Hewitt for some bread. Lucy's pretty face had flushed all over, and she glanced timidly at her husband. Remembering past days, she had not much faith in Theresa's moderation.

"When Mrs. Cleeve, knowing Lucy's inexperience and youth, suggested that I should stay here for some time after her return home, Sir Karl, if agreeable to you and to her, and I acquiesced, wishing to be useful to both of you in any way that might be, I had no conception there was not a church open for daily worship in the place. I must go to daily worship, Sir Karl. It is as essential to me as my bread and cheese."

"I'm sure I can say nothing against daily worship—to those who have the time for it," rejoined Karl. "It is not *that* I fear, Miss Blake ; think how beautiful the daily service was in Winchester Cathedral."

"Oh of course ; yes," replied Miss Blake, in a slighting tone ; "the cathedral service was very well as far as it went. But you need not fear, Sir Karl."

"Thank you," he replied ; "I am glad to hear you say so." And the subject dropped.

The two ladies were alone for a few minutes after dinner in the North room. Lucy was standing at the open window.

"Of course you know all about the place by this time, Theresa," she suddenly said. "There's a house over there amidst those trees : who lives in it?"

"Some lady, I believe, who chooses to keep herself very retired," replied Miss Blake.

"Oh, I asked Karl, but he could not tell me : he says he is nearly as much a stranger here as I am. Theresa ! I do think that's a nightingale ! Listen."

"Yes we have nightingales here," said Miss Blake, indifferently.

Lucy crossed the lawn, and paced before the clusters of trees. The bird was just beginning its sweet notes. Karl came out, drew her hand

within his arm, and walked with her, until Miss Blake called out that the tea was waiting.

But Lucy yet was not very strong. She began to feel tired, and a sudden headache came on. When tea was over Karl said she must go to bed.

"I think I will," she answered. "If you will pardon my leaving you, Theresa. Good night."

Karl went up with her and stayed a few minutes talking. In coming down he went straight to his smoking-room and shut the door.

"Very polite, I'm sure!" thought Miss Blake, resentfully.

But the next moment she heard him leave it and come towards the sitting-room.

"I will wish you good night too, Miss Blake," he said, offering his hand. "Pray ring for anything you may require: you are more at home, you know, than we are," he concluded with a slight laugh.

"Are you going to bed also, Sir Karl?"

"I? Oh no. I am going into my smoking room. I have a letter to write."

Now Miss Blake resented this frightfully. Lucy might go to bed; it was best for her as she was fatigued; but that Sir Karl should thus unceremoniously leave her to her own company at nine o'clock, she could not pardon. It was evident he thought nothing of her, even as a friend; nothing.

Dropping her forehead upon her hands she sat there she knew not how long. When she looked up it was nearly dark. Her thoughts had wandered to Mr. Cattacomb, and she wondered whether he would be arriving by the last train.

Throwing a shawl over her shoulders, Miss Blake went into the garden, and thence by one of the small private gates into the road. It was still and solitary. The nightingales were singing now, and she paced along, lost in thought, past the Maze and onwards.

She had got nearly as far as the road to Foxwood, when the advance of two or three passengers from the station told her the train was in. They turned off to the village, walking rapidly: but neither of them was the expected clergyman.

"What can have kept him?" she murmured, as she retraced her steps.

There was no moon, but the summer sky was light: not much of it, however, penetrated to the sides of the road through the overshadowing trees. Miss Blake had nearly reached the Maze when she heard the approach of footsteps. Not caring to be seen out so late alone, she drew back between the hedge and the clump of trees at the gate, and waited.

To her vexation, peeping forth from her place of shelter, she recognized Sir Karl Andinnian. He was stealing along under shadow of the

hedge too—*stealing* along, as it seemed to Miss Blake, covertly and quietly. When he reached the gate he looked up the road and down the road, apparently to make sure that no one was within sight or hearing: then he took a small key from his pocket, unlocked the strong gate with it, entered, locked it after him again, and disappeared within the trees of the veritable maze.

To say that Miss Blake was struck with amazement would be saying little. What could it mean? What could Sir Karl want there? He had told his wife he knew not who lived in it. And yet he carried a private key to the place, and covertly stole into it on this, the first night of his return! The queer ideas that floated through Miss Blake's mind, rapidly chasing each other, three parts bewildered her. They culminated in one emphatically spoken sentence.

"I should like to get inside too!"

Softly making her way across the road to enter the Court's grounds by the nearest gate, she chanced to lift her eyes to Clematis Cottage. The venetian shutters were closed. But, peering through one of them from the dark room, was a face that she was sure was Mr. Smith's. It looked just as though he had been watching Sir Karl Andinnian.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS BLAKE GETS IN.

STILL no signs of the Rev. Guy Cattacomb. The morning following the night told of in the last chapter rose bright and sunny. Miss Blake rose with it, her energetic mind full of thought.

"I wonder how I am to begin to keep house?" said Lucy with a laugh, when she got up from the breakfast table, her cheeks as bright as the pink summer muslin she wore. "Do I go into the kitchen, Theresa?"

"You go with the cook to the larder," replied Theresa, gravely. "See what remains in it from yesterday, and give your orders accordingly. Shall I go with you this morning, Lady Andinnian?"

"Oh I wish you would! I wish you'd put me in the way of it. In Paris, when I was going to be married, mamma regretted she had not shown me more of housekeeping at home."

"You have I believe an honest cook: and that is a great thing for an inexperienced mistress," said Miss Blake.

"As if cooks were ever dishonest in the country!" cried Sir Karl, laughing—and it was the first laugh Miss Blake had heard from his lips. "You must go to your grand London servants for that—making their perquisites out of everything, and feeding their friends and the policeman!"

"And then, Karl, when I come back from the larder, you will take me about everywhere, won't you?" whispered Lucy, leaning fondly over

his shoulder as Miss Blake went on. "I want to see all about the grounds."

He nodded and let his cheek rest for a moment upon hers. "Go and order your roast beef. And—Lucy!"

His manner had changed to seriousness. He turned in his chair to face her, his brow flushing as he took her hands.

"You will not be extravagant, Lucy—" his voice sinking to a whisper lower than hers. "When I told you of that—that trouble, which had fallen upon me and might fall deeper, I said that it would cost me a large portion of my income. You remember?"

"Oh Karl! do you think I could forget? We will live as quietly and simply as you please. It is all the same to me."

"Thank you, my dear wife."

Theresa stood at the open hall door, looking from it while she waited. "I was thinking," she said, when Lady Andinnian's step was heard, "that it really might be cheaper in the end if you took a regular housekeeper, Lucy, as you are so inexperienced. It would save you a great deal of trouble."

"The trouble's nothing, Theresa; and I should like to learn. I'd not think of a housekeeper. I should be afraid of her."

"Oh, very well. As you please, of course. But when you get your whole staff of servants, the house full of them, the controlling of the supplies for so many will very much embarrass you."

"But we don't mean to have our house full of servants, Theresa. We do not care to set up on a grand scale, either of us. Just about as papa and mamma live, will be enough for us indoors."

"Nonsense," said Miss Blake.

"We must have a coachman—Karl thinks he shall take on Sir Joseph's; the man has asked to come—and, I suppose, one footman to help Hewitt, and a groom. That's all. I think we have enough maids now."

"You should consider that Sir Karl's income is a large one, Lucy," spoke Miss Blake in a tone of lofty reproach. "It is absurd to take your papa's scale of living as a guide for yours."

"But Sir Karl does not mean to spend his income: he has a reason for saving it."

"Oh that's another thing," said Miss Blake. "What is his reason?"

The young Lady Andinnian could have reproached her rebellious tongue. She had spoken the hasty words in the heat of argument, without thought. What right, either as a wife or a prudent woman, had she to allow allusion to it to escape her lips? Her rejoinder was given slowly and calmly.

"My husband is quite right not to set out by spending all his income, Theresa. We should both of us think it needless extravagance. Is this

the kitchen? Let us go in here first. I must get acquainted with all my place and people."

The business transacted, Lucy went out with Karl. Theresa watched them on to the lawn and thence round the house, Lucy in her broad-brimmed straw hat and her arm within her husband's. Miss Blake then dressed herself and walked rapidly to St. Jerome's. Some faint hope animated her that Mr. Cattacomb might have arrived, and be already inaugurating the morning service. But no. St. Jerome's was closely shut, and no Mr. Cattacomb was there.

She retraced her steps, lingering to rob the hedges of a wild honeysuckle or a dog-rose. This non-arrival of Mr. Cattacomb began to trouble her, and she could not imagine why, if he were prevented coming, he had not written to say so. Reaching the Maze Miss Blake woke up from these thoughts with quite a start of surprise: for the gate was open and a woman servant stood there, holding colloquy with the butcher's boy on horseback; a young man in a blue frock, no hat, and basket on his arm. A middle-aged and very respectable servant, but somewhat old-fashioned in her appearance: a spare figure straight up and down, in a dark cotton gown and white muslin cap. In her hand was a dish with some meat on it, which she had just received from the basket, and she appeared to be reproaching the boy on the score of the last joint's toughness.

"This hot weather one can't keep nothing hardly," said the boy, in apology. "I was to ask for the book, please ma'am."

"The book!" returned the woman. "Why I meant to have brought it out. Wait there, and I'll get it."

The boy, having perhaps the spirit of restlessness upon him, backed his steed and turned him round and round in the road like a horse in a mill. Miss Blake saw her opportunity and slipped in. Gliding along the path, she concealed herself behind a huge tree-trunk near the hedge, until the servant should have come and gone again. Miss Blake soon caught sight of her skirts amid the trees of the maze.

"Here's the book," said she to the boy. "Ask your master to make it up for the month, and I'll pay." And, shutting and locking the gate, she plunged into the maze again and disappeared.

When people do covert things in a hurry, they can't expect to have all their senses about them, and Miss Blake had probably forgotten that she should be locked in. However—here she was in the position, and must make the best of it.

First of all, she went round the path, intending to see where it led to. It was fenced in by the garden wall, the high hedge and shrubs on one side, by the trees of the maze on the other. Suddenly she came to what looked like a low vaulted passage built in the maze, which probably communicated with the house: but she could not tell. Its door was fast, and Miss Blake could see nothing.

Pursuing her way along the walk, it brought her round to the entrance gate again, and she remembered Tom Pepp's words about the path going round and round and leading to nowhere. Miss Blake was not one to be daunted. She had come in to look about her, and she meant to do it. She plunged into the maze.

Again had she cause to recall Master Pepp's account,—“Once get into that there maze and you'd never get out again without the clue.” Miss Blake began to fear there was only too much truth in it. For a full hour in reality, and it seemed to her like two, did she wander about and wander again. She was in the maze, and could not get out of it.

She stood against the back of a tree, her face turning hot and cold. It took a great deal to excite that young woman's pulses: but she did not like the position in which she had placed herself.

She must try again. Forward thither, backward hither, round and about, in and out. No; no escape; no clue; no opening: nothing but the same interminable trees and the narrow paths so exactly like one another.

“What will become of me?” gasped Miss Blake.

At that moment a voice very near rose upon her ear—the voice of the servant she had seen. “Yes, ma'am, I'll do it after dinner.”

Unconsciously Miss Blake had wandered to the confines of the maze that were close on the house. A few steps further and she could peep out of her imprisonment.

A small, low, pretty gabled-house of red brick. A sitting-room window, large and thrown open, faced Miss Blake; the porch entrance, of which she could get a slanting glimpse, fronted a grass-plat, surrounded by most beautiful flower-beds, with a greenhouse at the end. It was a snug, compact spot, the whole shut in by a high laurel hedge. On the grass stood the woman servant, spreading some bits of linen to dry, that Miss Blake made out to be cambric handkerchiefs: her mistress had probably been speaking to her from the porch. An old man, with either a slight hump on his back or a dreadful stoop, was bending over a distant flower-bed. He wore a wide, yellow straw hat, and a smock-frock similar to that of the butcher's boy, only the latter's was blue and the old man's white. His hair was grey and he appeared to be toothless: but in his prime he must have been tall and powerful. Miss Blake made her comments.

“What an extraordinary solitude for a young person to live in! But what choice flowers those look to be! That toothless old man must be the gardener! he looks too aged and infirm for his work. Why *does* she live here? There must be more in it than meets the eye. Perhaps—”

The soliloquy was arrested. The door of the sitting-room opened, and a young lady entered. Crossing to the window, she stood looking at something on the table underneath, in full view of Miss Blake. A

fair girl, with a delicate face, damask cheeks, blue eyes, and hair that gleamed like threads of light gold.

"Good gracious! how lovely she is!" was Miss Blake's involuntary thought. Could this young girl be Mrs. Grey?

She left the window again. The next minute the keys of a piano were touched. A prelude was played softly, and then there rose a verse of those lines in the "*Vicar of Wakefield*" that you all know so well, the voice of the singer exceedingly melodious and simple:

"When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray."

Miss Blake had never in her life cared for the song, but it bore now a singular charm. Every word was distinct, and she listened to the end. A curious speculation crossed her.

Was this young lady singing the lines in character? "Heaven help her then!" cried Miss Blake—for she was not all hardness.

But how was she, herself, to get away? She might remain there unsought for ever. There was nothing for it but boldly showing herself. And, as the servant was then coming back across the lawn with some herbs which she had apparently been to gather, Miss Blake wound out of the maze, and presented herself before the woman's astonished eyes.

She made the best excuse she could. Had wandered inside the gate, attracted by the mass of beautiful trees, and lost herself amidst them. After a pause of wondering consideration, the servant understood how it must have been—that she had got in during her temporary absence from the gate when she went to fetch the butcher's book; and she knew what a long while she must have been there.

"I'll let you out," she said. "It's a pity you came in."

Very rapidly the woman walked on through the maze, Miss Blake following her. There were turnings and twistings, and the latter strove to catch some clue to the route. In vain. One turning, one path seemed just like another.

"Does your mistress live quite alone here?" she asked of the servant.

"Yes, ma'am," was the reply, more civilly spoken—for, that the servant had been much put out by the occurrence, her manner testified. "She's all alone, except for me and my old man."

"Your old man?" exclaimed Miss Blake questioningly.

"My husband," explained the woman, perceiving she was not understood. "He's the gardener."

"Oh, I saw him," said Miss Blake. "But he looks quite too old and infirm to do much."

"He's not as old as he looks—and he has got a good deal of work in him still. Of course when a man gets rheumatics, he can't be as active as before."

"How very dull your mistress must be!"

"Not at all, ma'am. She has her birds, and flowers, and music, and

work. And the garden she's very fond of: she'll spend hours in the greenhouse over the plants."

"Mrs. Grey, I think I have heard her called."

"Yes, Mrs. Grey."

"Well now—where's her husband?"

"She's not got a hus— At least,—her husband's not here."

The first part of the answer was begun in a fierce, resentful tone: but at the break the woman calmed down. Miss Blake was silently observant, pondering all in her inquisitive mind.

"Mr. Grey is travelling abroad just now," continued the woman. "Here we are."

Yes, there they were, escaped from the maze and the iron gate before them. The woman took a key from her pocket and unlocked it—just as Sir Karl had taken a key from his pocket the previous night. Miss Blake saw now what a small key it was, to undo so large a gate.

"Good morning," she said. "Thank you very much. It was exceedingly thoughtless of me to stroll in."

"Good day to you, ma'am."

Very busy was Miss Blake's brain as she went home. The Maze puzzled her. That this young and pretty woman should be living alone in that perfect seclusion with only two servants to take care of her, one of them at least old and decrepid, was the very oddest thing she had ever met with. Miss Blake knew the world tolerably well; and, so far as her experience went, a man whose wife was so young and so lovely as this wife, would take her travelling with him. Altogether, it seemed very singular: and more singular still seemed the stealthy and familiar entrance, that she had witnessed, of Sir Karl Andinnian.

It could not be said that Lady Andinnian had no acquaintance at Foxwood. She knew the vicar's eldest daughter, Margaret, who had occasionally stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Blake at Winchester: the two clergymen were acquainted, having been at college together. Lady Andinnian went at once to see Miss Sumnor; walking alone, for Karl was busy. The church, a very pretty one, with a tapering spire, was just through the village; the vicarage joined it, a nice house, with a verandah running along the front, and a good garden and glebeland.

On a couch in a shaded room, lay a lady of some thirty, or more, years of age; her face thin, with upright lines between the eyebrows, telling of long-standing trouble or pain, perhaps of both; her hands busy with some needle-work. Lady Andinnian, who had not given her name, but simply asked to see Miss Sumnor, was shown in. She did not recognize her at the first moment.

"Margaret! It cannot be you."

Margaret Sumnor smiled her sweet, patient smile, and held Lady Andinnian's hand in hers. "Yes it is, Lucy—if I may presume still to call you so. You find me changed. Worn and aged."

"It is true. You look altogether different. And yet, it is not three years since we parted. Mrs. Blake has told me you were ill and had to lie down a great deal."

"I lie here always, Lucy. Getting off only at night to go to my bed in the next room. Now and then, if I am particularly well, they draw me across the garden to church in a hand-chair: but that is very seldom. Sit down. Here, close to me."

"And what is the matter with you?"

"It has to do with the spine, my dear. A bright young girl like you need not be troubled with the complication of particulars. The worst of it is, Lucy, that I shall be as I am now for life."

"Oh Margaret!"

Miss Sumnor raised her work again and set a few stitches, as if determined not to give way to any kind of emotion. Lady Andinnian's face wore quite a frightened look.

"Surely not for always, Margaret!"

"I believe so. The doctors say so. Papa went to the expense of having a very clever man down from London; but he only confirmed what Mr. Moore had feared."

"Then, Margaret, I think it was a cruel thing to let you know it. Hope and good spirits go so far to help recovery, no matter what the illness may be. Did the doctor tell you?"

"They told my father, not me. I learnt it through—through a sort of accident, Lucy," added Miss Sumnor: who would not explain that it was through the carelessness—to call it by a light name—of her step-mother. "After all, it is best that I should know it. I see it is now, if I did not at the time."

"How it must have tried you!"

"Oh it did; it did. What I felt for months, Lucy, I cannot describe. I had grown to be so useful to my dear father: he had begun to want me so very much; to depend upon me for so many things: and to find that I was suddenly cut off from being of any help to him, to be instead only a burden!—even now I cannot bear to recall it. It was that that changed me, Lucy: in a short while I had gone in looks from a young woman into an aged one."

"No no, not that. And you have to bear it always!"

"The bearing is light now," said Miss Sumnor, looking up with a happy smile. "One day, Lucy, when I was in a sad mood of distress and inward repining, papa came in. He saw a little of what I felt; he saw my tears, for he had come upon me quickly. Down he sat in that very chair that you are sitting in now. 'Margaret, are you realizing that this calamity has come upon you from God—that it is His will?' he asked: and he talked to me as he had never talked before. That night, as I lay awake thinking, the new light seemed to dawn upon me. 'It is, it is God's will,' I said, 'why should I repine in misery?' Bit by

bit, Lucy, after that, the light grew greater. I gained—oh such comfort !—in a few weeks more I seemed to lie right under God's protection ; to be, as it were, always in His sheltering Arms : and my life is happier now than I can tell you of, in spite of very many and constant trials."

"And you manage to amuse yourself, I see," resumed Lucy, breaking the pause that had ensued.

"Amuse myself ! I can assure you my days are quite busy and useful ones. I sew—as you perceive, resting my elbows on the board ; see, this is a pillow-case that I am darning. I read, and can even write a note ; I manage the housekeeping ; and I have my class of poor children here and teach them as before. They are ten times more obedient and considerate, seeing me as I am, than when I was in health."

Lucy could readily believe it. "And now tell me, Margaret, what brought this illness on ?"

"Nothing in particular. It must have been coming on for years, only we did not suspect it. Do you remember at the rectory, I never used to run or walk much, but always wanted to sit still, and dear Mrs. Blake would call me idle ? It was coming on then. But now, Lucy, let me hear about yourself. I need not ask if you are happy."

Lucy blushed rosy red : she was only too happy : and gave an account of her marriage and sojourn abroad, promising to bring her husband some day soon to see Miss Sumnor. Next, they spoke of the new place—St. Jerome's, and the invalid's brow wore a look of pain.

"It has so grieved papa, Lucy. Indeed, there's no want of another church in the place, even if it were a proper church, there's no one to attend it : our own is too large for the population. Papa is grieved at the movement, and at the way it is being done ; it is anything but orthodox. And to think that it should be Theresa Blake who has put it forward !"

"The excuse she makes to us is that she wanted a daily service."

"A year ago papa took to hold daily service, and he had to discontinue it, for no one attended. Very often there would be only himself and the clerk."

"I do not suppose this affair of Theresa's will last," said Lucy, kindly, as she took her leave.

They met at dinner : Sir Karl, Lucy, and Miss Blake. Lucy told them of her visit to Margaret Sumnor, and asked her husband to go there with her on his return from London, whither he was proceeding on the morrow. Miss Blake had not heard of the intention before, and inquired of Sir Karl whether he was going for long.

"For a couple of days ; perhaps three," he answered. "I have several matters of business to attend to."

"I think I might as well have gone with you, Karl," said his wife.

"Not this time, Lucy. You have only just come home from travelling, you know, and need repose."

Miss Blake, having previously taken her determination to do it, mentioned, in a casual, airy kind of way, her adventure of the morning : not however giving to the intrusion quite its true aspect, and not saying that she had seen the young lady. She had "strolled accidentally" into the place called the Maze, she said, seeing the gate open, and lost herself. A woman servant came to her assistance and let her out again ; but not before she had caught a glimpse of the interior : the pretty house and lawn and flowers, and the infirm old gardener.

To Miss Blake's surprise—or, rather, perhaps not to her surprise—Sir Karl's pale face turned to a burning red. He made her no answer, but whisked his head round to the butler, who stood behind him.

"Hewitt," he cried sharply, "this is not the same hock that we had yesterday."

"Yes, Sir Karl, it is. At least I—I believe it is."

Hewitt took up the bottle on the sideboard and examined it. Miss Blake thought he looked as confused as his master. "He plays tricks with the wine," was the mental conclusion she drew.

Hewitt came round, grave as ever, and filled up the glasses again. Karl began talking to him about the wine in the cellar : but Miss Blake was not going to let her subject drop.

"Do you know this place that they call the Maze, Sir Karl?"

"Scarcely."

"Or its mistress, Mrs. Grey?"

"I have seen her," shortly replied Karl.

"Oh, have you! When?"

"She wrote me a note relative to some repairs, and I went over."

"Since you were back this time, do you mean?"

"Oh no. It was just after my mother's death."

"Don't you think it very singular that so young a woman should be living there alone?"

"I suppose she likes it. The husband is said to be abroad."

"You have no acquaintance with the people?" persisted Miss Blake.

"Oh dear no."

"And going in with a key from his own pocket!" thought Miss Blake, as she drew in her lips.

"Foxwood and its inhabitants, as I told Lucy, are tolerably strange to me," added Sir Karl. "Lucy, you were talking of Margaret Sumnor : What age is she?"

He was resolute in turning the conversation from the Maze : as Miss Blake saw. What was his motive? All kinds of comical ideas were in her mind, not all of them good ones.

"I'll watch," she mentally said. "In the interests of religion, to say nothing of respectability, *I'll watch.*"

(To be continued.)

THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING.

X. HAD come up to London the night before, having been staying a few days with some friends in a somewhat distant part of the country. The night was dark and gloomy, and as the train rushed past towns, villages, and stations, with a speed that almost took its passengers' breath away, not a star above enlivened the sky; the moon, only a day or two past the full, withheld her light. Every now and then there came the excitement of a slight shower, as if to remind them, with a kind of shock, that to-morrow might be worse than to-night—and to-night was bad enough. The train was long, and crowded with passengers, all apparently hastening to town with one object—that of seeing the procession, or of assisting, as the French say, at the Service in St. Paul's.

She steamed into Rugby, puffing and snorting with her heavy freight; and here most passengers alighted. There was an incessant buzz on the platform and in the refreshment room, like the humming of bees heard through a magnifying glass: and passing in and out amidst the crowd, different fragments of one conversation struck upon the ear; a sort of kaleidoscope talk—a continual change of words arising from the same cause. For that evening the passengers might all have been members of one great family; excepting such unlucky beings as X., who, journeying in solitary grandeur, were driven to the necessity of chumming up to some one who might possibly turn out to be a black-sheep; or of silently listening to all that was going forward. Not that there was any lack of occupation both for eyes and ears.

"What a cram, sir," remarked a porter to X. "The people all look as if they had taken a dose of quicksilver. I shouldn't mind seeing the procession; but if the seats are two guineas apiece, I'm best where I am."

And for once, certainly, the English seemed to have cast off their tendency to the grave and phlegmatic so especially theirs in travelling, and to have put on a little of that lightness and sparkle to be met with on the other side the Channel, but seldom on this.

The Liverpool express, equally surcharged with an excited crowd bent upon the same errand, was twenty minutes late; people had to wait, cooling their heels on the platform, or crowding round the fire in the waiting-rooms, until it was the train's good pleasure to put in an appearance. This it accomplished at last, and the two long trains, coupled together, steamed off for London. A convoi so long and so burthened has probably only now and then entered the Euston Terminus. In a moment all was bustle and confusion. Scarcely was the train at rest before the passengers in the greatest hurry tumbled out of the carriages, for all the world like potatoes out of a sack, each anxious

to secure a cab before all were gone. But the cabs, anticipating a harvest, had assembled in force, and were equal to the emergency. A stream of them was immediately set in motion, and rattled away for about ten minutes, under the echoing roof, like an incessant volley of musketry, dying off into the more distant roar of a waterfall.

The streets just here were quiet and deserted; but not so very far off, in the region of decorations and illuminations and triumphal arches, they were no doubt noisy and thronged enough. The clouds were low and heavy-looking, seeming to touch the tops of the tallest houses: a betting man would have staked any amount on a wet morrow, and many hearts must have sunk as they thought of the disappointment it would bring to hundreds of thousands—it is scarcely incorrect to say millions, of pleasure-seeking, loyal-hearted folk. X., for his own part, knowing what lay before him only a few hours hence, made the best of his way homewards; reserving strength, like a sensible man, for the day of action.

The next morning X., like all wise people, was stirring by six o'clock. The first thought, the first anxiety, with many, must have been the weather. It was a cold, raw-looking morning, with an unpleasant wind blowing, and before seven o'clock a slight shower had fallen. This, however, seemed to clear the air and lighten the clouds; for from that time certain fair weather signs made themselves visible. This was cheering.

At seven X. started in a hansom—just five times the proper fare having been first exacted by the driver—for St. Paul's. For some days past the papers had been so urgent in their counsels, so alarming in their prophecies as to the difficulties of reaching the cathedral, that he hoped to reach his destination by ten o'clock; but there could be no certainty upon the point.

Entering Oxford Street, the scene that burst upon the view was startling, and for London perfectly bewildering. At the first moment X. rubbed his eyes, wondering whether he could be asleep and dreaming; or whether the train last night had not made some mistake, and landed him in some foreign capital instead of London. Flags were strung across the street from house to house, at intervals, all the way down to Oxford Circus, where the triumphal arch stopped both the way and the view. Flags and banners and decorations in artistic and curious devices were displayed from the houses in profusion, and on each side the way hung an unbroken string of Chinese lanterns, as far down as the eye could reach. These lanterns, more than anything else, gave to the panorama a foreign-like and almost fairy aspect, involuntarily calling up to the imagination the Chinese Feast of Lanterns with its accompaniment of chopsticks. But there were no Chinese Mandarins, with pigtails and buttons, visible; only sober English men and women, though with less than half their usual amount of soberness.

In place of the anticipated crowd in Oxford Street, it was almost as quick and easy a drive as on ordinary occasions ; but in spite of the early hour, it was a scene of excitement and activity. Windows were being taken out, to be filled up later on with seats, these in turn to be occupied by a sea of heads belonging both to the spear and the spindle members of creation. Scores of houses were undergoing this transformation, still in so backward a state of preparation that even a wizard, one would have thought, must have put out more than his powers to get all straight for the procession.

At Oxford Circus X. came upon the first triumphal arch, glorious with flags and flowers and gilding. A moment given to the contemplation of this work of art, then a swerve into Regent Street, and presto ! here was London again itself in its most ordinary attire. The procession would not pass down Regent Street, and consequently decorations there would have been a waste of loyalty and good things. But it was nothing less than a shock to the nerves : one moment Fairy Land : a wonder as to whether you were yourself or some one else ; in London or some far away Eastern Kingdom ; the next, London without doubt, unromantic and matter of fact as in its daily garb. The sensations in driving down Oxford Street had been most novel. Even to X., accustomed to such displays in foreign countries—as Lord Bateman has it—it was less like reality than like a page out of the Arabian Nights turned into life and motion. We do not look for these things in England ; somehow we have got to think the English incapable of such efforts ; and for this reason Tuesday's scene came upon many with unqualified surprise.

Regent Street was soon passed, and at Charing Cross the line of route was once more entered, and stands and decorations come upon. Here, for the first time, the press of carriages began to show the beginning of what would be by and by, and a slow march ensued. It was now nearly eight o'clock, yet many of the windows were crowded with fair faces, and many others, looking blue and dismal, yet resigned, had taken their seats in the open air stands, braving the chill morning air. The Strand had decorated itself with less elaboration than Oxford Street, but it had put on, nevertheless, an air of festivity and rejoicing. In due time Temple Bar came in sight, and in its new dress looked like anything rather than itself. It had been whitewashed for the occasion, and painted and gilded. The old figures, with their one leg apiece, were now gorgeous in white and gold ; and in the middle, just above the arch, was placed a bust of the Prince of Wales. The Queen was to halt here to receive the keys of the City, which had been newly manufactured for the occasion ; to receive the sword also ; and so great pains had been taken to render the ancient gateway less time-worn and dilapidated than it usually appeared. And yet, what more honourable or more interesting signs could it have borne ? Draped in crimson cloth,

nothing but the old form remained : and not that altogether. Who would not sooner have seen the old Temple Bar, as associated with many of our historical remembrances? The present gateway, most of our readers will know, was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and built in 1671 ; the old wooden gateway having perished in the fire of 1666. Consequently Temple Bar has just entered on its third century.

Eight o'clock had struck before X. reached it, and immediately the gates were half closed. "Your ticket, sir," said a policeman, without which it was clear no vehicle would be let through. But the large white and yellow card bearing the Lord Chamberlain's signature proved an open sesame to the City gates. Once on the City side the barrier, the crush of vehicles again thinned, and it was possible to bowl along at a decent pace. Up to Temple Bar the decorations had been done by private people : beyond it, the civic authorities had stepped in and taken the matter in hand. Very soon the Gothic triumphal arch at the foot of Ludgate Hill was reached, erected at a cost of four thousand pounds : but the scaffolding was not down, and the flags were not half up, so that it was very far short of the full glory of perfection. It looked imposing ; a mass of gold and grandeur ; and, as the Vicar of Wakefield would have said, "had a very fine appearance." But the effect was not added to by the ugly railway arch that spans the foot of the hill, and which, from its earliest days, has created so much controversy. Ludgate Hill itself was decorated with flags and banners, and garlands of roses ; and every available nook and cranny had been made use of in the only thoroughfare through which the Queen would pass twice. The lamp-posts were painted blue, picked out with gold, the lamps surmounted with the Prince of Wales's feathers in crystal. Festoons of artificial flowers hung all the way up on each side the road, like the Chinese lanterns in Oxford Street, though not half so effective. They looked, indeed, artificial, ugly, and childish ; and the hill altogether was rather conspicuous for bad taste. Mottoes abounded in all parts of the route ; collected, they would fill a volume. They were of all sorts and descriptions, appropriate and the contrary ; the last not altogether in the minority. Some had a dash of the poetical ; a few aimed at poetry itself ; some erred on the side of the ludicrous ; and many were altogether out of place.

Amidst roses and garlands, and flags and mottoes, and a sea of faces on each side the road, St. Paul's was reached. The hands of the great clock pointed to a quarter past eight, and with a feeling approaching dismay X. found that nearly five hours' patient waiting and watching must pass before the Queen's arrival. For all that, he was by no means first in the building. Many had already assembled ; the doors, opened at eight, had admitted at once a crowd of ticket-holders. Conducted to his place, X. found himself in the west gallery, the very best position for a general effect of the whole building, as well as for seeing each

thing separately. The entire length of St. Paul's was before him. At the far end the east windows, one above the other, lent enchantment to the view. Beneath them, the altar, with its candlesticks, and gold plate, and crimson cloth, seemed far enough off to appeal to the imagination, suggesting almost, combined with the windows above, visions of another world. On either side the choir stood the new and the old organ; so that neither screen, nor organ, nor aught else, interrupted the long unbroken view. On one side was the pulpit with a gas-branch, lighted for some unknown and unnecessary reason, unless it was meant to take from the effect and dazzle the sight. No other gas was visible, except a row of jets round the whispering gallery, which threw warmth and colouring up into the dome. Beside the pulpit was the archbishop's throne, and immediately opposite, the chanter's desk. This was at the east end of the dome (not the east end of the building); and at the west end, on a somewhat raised platform, was placed the Queen's chair, together with seats for her suite. It was an arm-chair of crimson velvet; and chairs of the same, without arms, were placed on each side for the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the remainder of the Royal Family.

Seated in the west gallery, with a view of all that was going forward, nothing could have proved less tedious than the waiting: but to those in the side galleries, whether above or below, it must have been wearisome to the last extent. They could see little or nothing beyond the faces of those opposite to them, reflecting perhaps an index of their own feelings. Even the ceremony itself must have been tame and uninteresting. But to those who faced the east, each moment brought something fresh upon the attention.

Ere long some of the clergy began to appear; their white surplices, fluttering hither and thither, enlivening the scene; and a few scarlet gowns standing out conspicuously. By ten o'clock one or two of the bishops might be seen, standing near the altar. Then the representatives of the army and navy took leave to assemble, ranging themselves up the west aisle, on each side, where the Royal party would pass: and after that the building seemed to fill rapidly. Immediately beneath the dome some of the judges took their seats, splendid in scarlet and ermine, imposing in wigs and gravity: and the area reserved for the peers and peeresses began to look, where sat the ladies, like a garden of many coloured flowers. About twelve o'clock the Beefeaters appeared, and ranged themselves on each side the west aisle, so that the Queen would pass between them. There were about a dozen in all, and immediately one's thoughts went back in imagination to the Tower of London, and the good old days long since dead and buried.

So the time went on, until there seemed no longer room for any one. On each side the west aisle were the army and navy: behind them some of the provincial mayors; a large body also in scarlet and

ermine, who gave colouring to the scene, if nothing else. By twelve o'clock the choir was thronged. Here all seemed confusion and disorder; but the barrier kept the crowd from passing beneath the dome. Soon after twelve the Archbishop of Canterbury might be seen threading his way through this multitude, which fell back for him as far as it was able. He was conducted to his throne, and seemed pale and ill.

Every moment now was a moment less to wait. The guns that could be distinctly heard at intervals announced that the Queen was on her way to St. Paul's. Imagination pictured the scene through which she was passing; the cheers of the multitude which greeted her; the ten thousand cheers that would greet the Prince, should he happily be able to come. Just at twelve the sun broke out, and lighted up the building to brightness. A better or finer day could not have been desired. A little before one the clergy, including the Bishop of London and the Dean and Chapter, filed down the aisle to the great west entrance, to meet Her Majesty, who must now be near at hand. A few moments before the hour a loud voice announced the arrival of the Queen, and the whole assembled multitude rose as with one accord.

The sight was most solemn and impressive. All hearts must have beat faster with expectation, and the most sluggish have felt roused into emotion. First entered the Speaker at a slow and stately pace; his robes of black watered silk held up by train-bearers, preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the mace. The Speaker, the first object in the procession, was undoubtedly, on the whole, the most dignified. Next followed at a short interval the Lord Chancellor, in his ponderous wig and scarlet robes, preceded by the Yeoman Usher and a Macebearer, and followed by the great seal. After this the clergy commenced filing on in couples, and had got some distance up the aisle before it was found out that they had made a mistake and must file back again. The ignominious retreat evidently unnerved them. Some backed as one does at Court; and others turned round and marched straight forward. What could it mean? Whose dignity had they ruffled by preceding them? In a moment the mystery was solved. With expectation on tiptoe, through this trifling incident, there entered in the full glow of state My Lord Mayor's procession. The City Marshal, the Macebearer, and the Swordbearer: my Lord Mayor himself carrying the sword: which, had it been of gold, looked heavy enough for a country's ransom.

The clergy full of penitence and humiliation now followed, with lowly step and gaze downcast; as was but seemly after their late boldness; they were headed by the Bishop of London. At that moment the clock struck one; the clergy filed up; a transient interval, and the organ crashed out with "God Save the Queen," as Her Majesty entered the cathedral.

A moment more thrilling, impressive, and solemn cannot well be

conceived. It is unnecessary to enumerate the long list of Court officials that preceded the Royal party, resplendent in Court dresses and uniforms, blazing with gold and silver lace. These, a large body of them, paced up the aisle, and when they had disposed of themselves, then entered the Queen, her gracious presence inspiring all hearts with a throb of love and loyalty. Every breath seemed hushed as she slowly ascended the aisle to her pew. The Queen was leaning on the left arm of the Prince of Wales, who limped as he walked. On the other side the Queen walked the Princess of Wales, robed in blue satin and velvet; looking more beautiful and elegant than words can describe. The little—and yet the much—that had become known of her inner life and heart during the Prince's illness flashed into the mind; and gratitude for the brightness of her present lot compared with what might have been, must have dimmed many an eye. The Prince of Wales led one young child by the hand, the Princess led another. This gave a home-like, familiar aspect to the Royal group, that was in itself pleasant. And in this manner the Royal party proceeded to their pew, bending in silence to the assembled multitude, as they in equal silence bowed their heads to them. As the Queen took her seat the organ ceased, and for a few moments all was dead silence. Then the Queen rose from her knees, the assembly having remained standing, and the "Te Deum" commenced.

Before this the apparent confusion in the choir had given place to order and harmony. The clergy and lay-clerks had taken their seats; and the white surplices, ranged in precisely the same order on each side, looked like two large wings resting in stillness, which added much to the effect of the scene. From east to west of the cathedral ran a broad passage or pathway, unbroken by anything save the Queen herself, terminating at the east end with a communion table.

Much has been spoken for and against the composition of the music given on the occasion. It is unnecessary to enter here into the discussion; but whatever else may be said, one thing is certain: the singing was some of the best that ever was heard.

The prayers selected for the occasion were intoned by the Lord Mayor's chaplain; and rarely has better chanting been heard within the cathedral. Every word was distinctly audible, as it was given in a clear, powerful, musical voice. Then followed the anthem, splendidly sung; then a short address from the Archbishop of Canterbury, which, however, seemed to last nearer twenty than the announced ten minutes, and could only have been heard by about one in fifty. Then followed the Blessing; and the Thanksgiving service was over.

It had been inexpressibly solemn and impressive—we must repeat the words, for they are appropriate to the occasion. The Royal party left the cathedral exactly as they had entered it, bowing on each side as they passed. The Queen looked full of emotion; the Prince and

Princess were pale, as indeed they might well be, after an ordeal of feeling that must have been one of the most trying of their lives. As they passed out to their carriage, the shout from the countless numbers assembled outside and round St. Paul's was such as perhaps will never be heard again. All down the line of procession the glad sound was taken up in one continued burst, until the very ground itself must have shaken with its echoes. At twenty minutes to four the Royal carriages entered Buckingham Palace, and for their Royal occupants the day must have been comparatively over. But its effect surely will remain as long as life and memory are spared to them.

Nothing could be more gratifying to both monarch and people than this universal burst of homage: this proof of loyalty that came straight from all hearts: telling of a love to the Sovereign—"Queen by the grace of GOD"—that is born with us, and lives and dies with us; a sentiment shared by the highest as the most humble in the land.

We care not to contemplate the emotions that must have existed for so many hours in the hearts of the Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales: they are best thought of in silence. But we do care to see and to feel that the loyal hearts which have for centuries formed part of the English constitution and heritage and birthright are still as true and unswerving in their devotion as the needle to the pole; as day and night; as the ebb and flow of the ocean.

All who took part in the service sacrificed this scene, which must have been overpowering to witness; but the service in St. Paul's appealed to a yet higher part of our nature, and gave rise to emotions that are best left untouched. It was undoubtedly a day and a scene such as all now living may probably never again witness: such a day as in time to come will form in history one of the brightest and best facts recorded of Queen Victoria's long and brilliant reign.

That the Sovereign will in future come more amongst her people, by whom she is so beloved, and give them the unqualified pleasure—a pleasure that is turned into a calamity if withheld—of feeling her in their midst; that they have over them not only the monarch, but the mother of a great nation; must be a wish that finds a fervent echo in every heart.

The rumours of the splendour of the illuminations probably took many into the crowd who would never otherwise have ventured there; and X. found himself at night in a very different scene from that of the morning. Taken as a whole, the novelty of the countless number of spectators was a more curious study than the brilliant exhibitions of gas. To X., indeed, whose imagination had taken perhaps impossible flights owing to the above mentioned rumours, the disappointment was provoking. Nothing new or startling was forthcoming; and in an age of progression such as this each succeeding occasion should give rise

to fresh efforts and ingenuity. The same old devices were flaring away, a want of uniformity in the designs being more conspicuous than anything else : had a whole street clubbed together, and put the matter into the hands of one man, the result would have been in the end less costly, and infinitely more satisfactory. As it was, in most cases the effect of one illuminated house was spoilt by a block of five or six or more in perfect darkness, save for the borrowed light of reflection.

From an upper window in Regent Street a figure of Punch was being dangled in the air, suspended from a long pole and a line. Certain of the gazers took up the extraordinary idea that this was meant for a representation of the Claimant in the Tichborne case ; and bursts of laughter, groans, hisses, and cheers came from all sides. Fireworks, too, were let off from these windows. But the proceeding caused a pressure in the crowd, which of course would not move on when anything unusual was to be seen, and gave rise to discomfort and danger. Temple Bar was worthy of its reputation, with its rows of white opaque lamps and illuminated mottoes : but the best display, on the whole, was perhaps the Bank of England. Here the long building admitted of an unbroken uniformity of design, which only proved how effective such a plan would be, universally adopted. Then the illuminations would be worth what they certainly are not now—the trouble and fatigue and danger incurred in entering such a mass of people.

The crush was indeed terrific, and that many accidents occurred—many of which the world will never hear of—was only to be anticipated. Getting through Temple Bar was a feat worthy of a conjuror ; and perhaps the most deserving of pity was the unfortunate but famous knocker : the crowd in passing through kept up an incessant volley of raps : which, could the knocker feel, would probably make it still testify to a lingering soreness. Many women in the crowd were terrified ; many fainted ; some had babies in their arms, and even at the breast. This was the saddest of all sights, for in such a pressure the poor helpless infants had little chance for life.

But the night, happily for X., came to an end, or probably it would have made an end of him. Visions of royalty floated through his dreams ; and in the morning he woke up with a confused sense of having been cheered by a countless throng, the centre of attraction in a procession of many thousands of miles lasting through some score of years.

But in the first awakening there was also a feeling that one of the brightest days of a prosperous reign was happily and successfully ended : a feeling, above all, that the Prince whom the country had been so near losing was again that country's own, in deed and in truth, to rejoice over ; given back to its prayers by a merciful God.

THE TWO CLERKS.

BY ANNE BEALE, AUTHOR OF "A WEEK'S ROMANCE."

"I CAN'T stand it any longer, and I won't," cried Mark Streynsham. "I will throw up my appointment and try my luck in South America."

Cuthbert Noble, to whom the remark was addressed, laughed. "You had better stick to the desk as I must do," he said.

"Write, write, write—reckon, reckon, reckon—pens, and paper, and ink—ink, and paper, and pens—nothing else from morning till night," sighed Mark. "Why I work in such a maze that the ledgers grow blue, and I don't know red ink from black. This fortnight's fresh air and liberty have settled my mind; 'the prairie life is the life for me.'"

"And your parents?" suggested Cuthbert.

"They won't care when the first brush is over. I shall marry a rich girl—say a twenty-thousand-pounder—and they will call me a lucky dog and forgive my misdemeanours."

"Your prospects are brighter than mine," laughed Cuthbert. "No rich girl would have me; and if I followed my inclination and escaped from London fog and gas by daylight, to clear skies and no gas at all, my mother and sisters would break their hearts."

"You see, Noble, you are not so popular with the ladies as I am. You are too grave. In these days, nothing goes down with them but chaff, and you are too sensible by half."

"I dare say you are right, Mark. But, at any rate, I enjoy this glorious day and these mountains more than you; for I live in the present moment without wearying my mind about desks or prairies."

"You are so matter of fact, old fellow, that you will never make your way in the world; whereas, with my face, talents, and—impudence, shall I say?—I am sure to rise."

"Soit," said Cuthbert. "But just look at that carriage winding up the gorge. I wish I was an artist."

"Hurrah! I congratulate you on having, once in your life, wished for what you can't get," cried Mark, taking off his hat and waving it.

This hat was a marvellous anomaly, shaped like a brigand's, adorned like a sportsman's: war and peace combined. It was surrounded by wonderful flies, and feathers of many-coloured birds, and seemed to accord well with the fantastic collar, short brown velvet jacket and knickerbockers, and steel-buckled highlows that accompanied it.

Mark Streynsham and Cuthbert Noble were spending a brief holiday by making a walking tour in North Wales. As they stood to gaze at

the carriage that was toiling up a steep road below them, through a mountain pass leading to a precipitous ravine, they looked as free from care as the bird poising in the blue above. They were surrounded by sun-tipped, heather-clad mountains, and invigorated by breezes that gave them the strength they sought. Mark's face was bright and joyous. He had mischievous blue eyes, with a lazy light lurking in their corners, fair, curly hair, and a general expression of countenance and manners that betokened self-possession, if not the impudence he himself suggested. Cuthbert's appearance was less attractive. He was of dark complexion, broad and somewhat heavy brow, grave eyes, and reserved manner. His dress was in no wise remarkable, and but for the leathern portmanteau slung across his shoulder and a sprig of heather in his button-hole, he might have been on his way to his daily toil before the desk so much reprobated by his friend.

They watched the carriage till it had wound out of their sight, then began to descend the mountain towards the road which it had travelled. They reached it in due course, and again paused to admire the magnificent view that lay beneath them, of a valley through which wound a rapid river, and gentle slopes, covered with woods and dotted with white cottages.

A young girl suddenly appeared in the gorge through which the carriage had passed, and hastened towards them.

"My shepherdess with broad hat and crook. We have just seen her goats," said Cuthbert.

"My twenty-thousand-pounder in fashionable costume," said Mark.

As she approached, it was evident that Mark was nearer the truth than Cuthbert. She turned out to be a young lady in summer dress of white piqué, as it is called, broad flat hat, and a wealth of flowing golden hair. She might almost have been Cuthbert's ideal shepherdess,—for the Dolly Vardens of the age are picturesque sometimes. She addressed them at once.

"Our carriage has broken down about a quarter of a mile off. Would you be so kind as to help the coachman. I am going for the blacksmith."

"I will return with you to the carriage," said the ready Mark. "Cuthbert, you can run for the smith. We passed the forge about half a mile below."

"Oh, thank you so much," said the young lady, glancing at the youths, and perceiving, probably, for the first time that they were gentlemen.

While Cuthbert did as he was bid, and ran breathlessly down the mountain road to a picturesque and lonely blacksmith's shop at its base, Mark accompanied the girl on her way back to the carriage.

"No one hurt, I hope," he began. "These break-neck mountain

passes would shiver Gog and Magog's car, if they ever had one. Why don't they tunnel the hills?"

"Then nobody would admire them," said the young lady. "We are proud of our mountains."

"And no wonder," said Mark. "I am dying to end my days amongst them, and never to enter a house again."

They hastened on side by side, Mark keeping up an incessant conversation till they reached the carriage.

"You cannot have been to the forge in this time, Gwendolin," said a gentleman, coming towards them.

Mark raised his hat, explained matters, and offered his services. A lady with a pink parasol, hat and feather, and an elaborate toilet joined them. The coachman was watching a pair of frisky horses while they munched the sweet mountain grass at a little distance. The carriage stood perilously on one side, just over a precipice.

"The spring is broken. It is providential that it is no worse. We shall be glad of all help to get the carriage right, for we are afraid of the horses," said the gentleman, who we may as well introduce as Mr. Madoc; the lady with the pink parasol being his sister, and Gwendolin his daughter.

"I am frightened to death," said Miss Madoc, who did, indeed, look pale as she sheltered herself from the afternoon sun beneath the parasol intended to flush with pink the cheeks of beauty.

Nothing could be done until the blacksmith arrived, so Mark began to make himself agreeable. He rarely failed in this, and was soon at home with the strangers. He found a sheltered spot for Miss Madoc, where she and the pink parasol looked like a large flower among the heather and bracken, and talked to her and Gwendolin of London seasons and country pleasures. Mr. Madoc was less at his ease than Mark and the ladies, for he paced up and down, muttering words concerning his coachman, horses, and the blacksmith, and groaning over the possible delay of dinner.

In about half an hour Cuthbert arrived, accompanied by the blacksmith and his tools.

"I am very much obliged to you," said Mr. Madoc.

"Not at all, sir," replied Cuthbert. "I am glad to have been of use."

"We must haul up the carriage before we can get at the spring," said the blacksmith in Welsh.

Mark offered to take care of the horses and the ladies while the coachman went to help; so he remained near them while the others put their shoulders to the wheel, and with much difficulty and some personal risk got the carriage into position again. Gwendolin, anxious for her father, walked to and fro, her pretty figure and golden locks now dancing in the sunlight near the horses, now wavering in the shadow of

the carriage. Mark watched her, and talked to her aunt, who was a pleasant woman enough, but his senior by so many years that he scarcely paused to note that she was yet young enough to remember that she had been a beauty, and was still handsome.

It was past six o'clock before the carriage was in a state to proceed. The sun was beginning to decline westward. Purple shadows flitted over the mountains, and the slanting sunbeams crossed them. The sheep and goats left their noontide retreats to browse in the open, and a wealth of gold lay on the valley and the river. The scene which surrounded the travellers was very beautiful, and they were none of them likely to forget either it or the adventure that introduced them to it.

Mark, assured that the Fates had sent him his twenty-thousand-pounder, had made the best of his opportunity, and fallen in love with Gwendolin on the spot. She was certainly the sort of young lady to take hearts by storm. Good spirits, health, and beauty united to make her charming, and there is nothing like mountain breezes to enhance these. Moreover, three or four hours' idleness among the hills, after a romantic adventure—chivalry on the one side, and ease and grace on the other—are hours of danger to ardent youth.

At length the horses were in, and the carriage was ready to resume its journey.

"We are greatly indebted for your ready help, sir," said Mr. Madoc to Cuthbert. "I scarcely know what we should have done without you. Can we give you and your friend a lift? We are going to Llanon, and shall get there in an hour or so."

"Thank you. We will not burden your horses. We are out for a walking tour, and cannot afford to lose the evening among the mountains," said Cuthbert, glancing at Mark, who overheard the invitation.

The carriage drove off amid thanks, apologies, and civilities on both sides.

"I wish you would answer for yourself, and not say *we*," said Mark, when they were out of hearing. "I am not so content to lose my chances as you. I would have given up all my prospects of an American El Dorado for a drive by the side of Gwendolin. Who is that gentleman?" turning to the blacksmith.

"Madoc, the banker, Llanon, sir; very rich mans—very good to poor pipples."

"There, Cuthbert! I assure you I made an impression. I'll be bound she's a twenty-thousand-pounder."

"It would have been a dangerous drive if the shepherdess is as good as she is pretty," rejoined Cuthbert. "But as we are to sleep at Llanon, you have still a chance."

They reached Llanon at nightfall, and Mark ascertained that Mr. Madoc's house was more than a mile out of the town.

The following morning Cuthbert missed Mark. As this was the last day of their holiday, and he wished to make the most of it, he went in search of him. He found him, after a brisk walk, loitering about a handsome lodge at the entrance to a drive.

"I just came to see where Gwendolin lives," he said, lazily. "Nice place. Now don't walk as if you were in for a wager. Her father is at his bank punctually at ten, and I mean him to overtake me."

"But I don't want him to overtake me," said Cuthbert. However, the lucky Mark had it his own way. A brisk step sounded behind them just before they re-entered the town, and Mr. Madoc hailed them.

"Good morning! I thought I knew your backs. I am glad to have an opportunity of thanking you again for your help yesterday. Perhaps, if you can spare the time, you will do us the favour of coming to luncheon this morning."

"Thank you very much; but we are to be——" began Cuthbert.

"Thanks," interrupted Mark; "we shall be delighted. But you do not even know who we are." He took out his card-case, and presented his card. "Mr. Mark Streynsham."

"Ah! I know some Streynshams. We will talk about them by and by. Excuse my leaving you now, for I have an appointment," said Mr. Madoc, hurrying on.

"I cannot go, Mark. I hate strangers, and I'm sure Mr. Madoc never entertained one of his own clerks in his life."

"Never too late to mend! he shall entertain us. I dare say he was a clerk himself. Besides, your father was an officer, and mine is a clergyman—what would he have?"

Cuthbert was overruled, and they went to Plâs Llanon as invited. Miss Madoc and Gwendolin received them very graciously, the latter looking quite as lovely in her own house as she did among the mountains. Mr. Madoc had the felicity of knowing something of a Sir James Streynsham, a distant relation of Mark's, whom he managed to draw near for the occasion; and so his respectability was settled. Cuthbert took refuge under its shadow; and, not being asked his name, did not volunteer it, until a chance call from Mark induced Mr. Madoc to inquire if he belonged to the Cuthberts of Oldmington, and compelled him to say that his name was Noble.

It was a pleasant luncheon, and even Cuthbert thawed under the influence of good wine and conversation. As to Mark, he was quite at home, and flattered himself—not without reason—that he was making an impression on the ladies. He discovered that Miss Madoc and Gwendolin sang, and gave them to understand that he also was musical. Miss Madoc proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room to have some music and to try her niece's new grand piano, and Mark assented joyfully. Cuthbert fancied that Mr. Madoc frowned at this,

considering a good luncheon return sufficient for favours received; nevertheless they adjourned. Mark was a musical genius, and sang and accompanied himself delightfully. He could play almost any instrument by ear, as he could have accomplished most things had he been endowed with perseverance. Cuthbert was sure that he had won Miss Madoc's heart before the end of his first song, and perceived that Gwendolin listened admiringly.

Mr. Madoc went out, and left the musicians. His sister was a first-rate performer and an accomplished singer. It was she, and not Gwendolin, who was the amateur. It mattered little to Mark at the moment, for he forgot everything else in his love of sweet sounds; and while he listened to "Songs Without Words" from the aunt, he allowed Cuthbert to snatch a "song with words" from the niece. They turned over a photograph-book together, and whispered comments on the uncomplimentary portraits painted by the sun.

"That is intended for me; but if I am like it I am very plain," said Gwendolin.

Cuthbert wanted to be polite, so he remarked that ladies seldom came out well.

"You are honest. I always say that my photograph is ugly, and nobody will believe me," laughed the young lady.

"You should see mine," said Cuthbert; "and my mother and sisters have put it into lockets."

"You have a sister?—is she young?" asked Gwendolin.

"Not very. She is older than I—old enough to be a governess," said Cuthbert, looking Gwendolin in the face for the first time.

"A governess! Poor girl! I should not like to be a governess, they get so teased. I was very provoking to mine. And you—are you a tutor?"

"That does not follow. I am a clerk in a bank," said Cuthbert, with a gulp.

"How strange!" said Gwendolin, simply. "Papa is a banker; but his clerks are not like you. However, I don't know much of them."

"So I imagined," said Cuthbert, losing his restrained manner now that he was no longer under false pretences.

Gwendolin was called by her aunt to join in a glee. Mr. Madoc returned, and began a conversation with Cuthbert upon something "Gladstone had been doing;" which grew animated. As soon as the glee came to an end Cuthbert rose to go, saying,

"We are much obliged to you, sir, for your hospitality."

"If ever you should go north, my father would be glad to welcome you at his vicarage," said Mark, glancing from Mr. Madoc to the ladies. "We might get hold of Sir James, and you could renew your acquaintance."

They shook hands and separated.

"Why didn't old Croesus ask us to dinner?" were Mark's first words when out of earshot; "and I made the most of Sir James."

"He was too wary," was Cuthbert's reply.

Cuthbert was obliged to make his evening explorations alone, as Mark declared himself too tired to do more than stroll about the immediate vicinity of the town. But he did not again meet Gwendolin. The following morning Cuthbert was ready for the mail train at six; Mark was in bed.

"I am not well: I will run up by the night express in time for to-morrow," he said, as Cuthbert tried to force him to rise. "It is no good, old fellow: you had better have your breakfast, or you'll be late too, and your mother in a fix. Sorry to deprive you of my society, but shall be with you to-morrow. *Au revoir!*"

The omnibus rattled up to the inn door, and rattled off; so Cuthbert was obliged to run for it, in order to catch the train. He snatched a roll from the breakfast table, having forgotten his appetite in his anxiety for Mark.

"You'll be sorry for this," he shouted, as he passed the door.

He was at his desk the next morning, but no Mark appeared. He made such excuses as he could for him, and called at his lodgings on his way home. He was not there. He wrote a hasty note, entreating him to return, and posted it just in time. He knew that Mark had long meditated an escape from what he called drudgery, and feared he was about to make it. Days passed—no Mark! no letter! He was asked for his address by the authorities, and knew well that they would take summary measures.

Meanwhile Mark was kicking about at Llanon, professing to be a tourist and fisherman, and making efforts to obtain interviews with Gwendolin. He met her and her aunt occasionally; but they were usually driving, and the carriage refused to break down again. They always bowed pleasantly, and looked, he thought, charmed to see him. One day they were on foot, and he joined them. He made the best of the occasion; and being, as has been said, handsome, agreeable, and in no common degree attractive, it would be difficult to estimate the effect of this third interview. On himself it was conclusive, for although he had been in love ever since he was six years old, he was never so irretrievably lost as now. Fortune favours the brave. One day he met the elder Miss Madoc alone. He turned with her, and they began to talk of music. They were near the lodge before he had the resolution to break the ice that froze up the subject nearest his heart.

"I cannot forget that day among the mountains," he began. "It and the luncheon and the music will ever be amongst my dearest memories. I am afraid I am bold—but would there—could there be a chance for me?"

Miss Madoc's cheeks emulated the pink parasol.

"You had better try," she said. "I always say there is nothing lost by trying."

A carriage went in at the lodge gate, and Miss Madoc hastened after it. Mark met Mr. Madoc hastening also, but did not receive a second invitation to luncheon.

"Was anything ever so provoking!" ejaculated Mark.

The next day he watched Gwendolin come out of a school-house which she frequented regularly. A troop of scarlet-cloaked children followed her. He dodged, and contrived to meet her. She was about to pass with a bow and smile, when he said quickly,

"Oh, how do you do? I am so glad to meet you alone. Might I ask for a few moments?"

She paused under a large tree not far from the lodge.

"I am the most unlucky fellow in the world, Miss Gwendolin. Why did Fate send me to the mountains on that luckless day? I have been wretched ever since."

"I am sorry, Mr. Streynsham. Can I be of any service?" said Gwendolin, glancing up at Mark's remarkably cheerful face.

"Can you? You could make me the happiest fellow in the world."

"I?" said Gwendolin, colouring and looking down again.

"I have been wasting in despair ever since that adventure," continued Mark. "I am giving up the world and my prospects. I neither eat nor drink. In short, I cannot continue to live in this doubt. Is there any hope for me?"

Gwendolin suppressed a smile which did not escape Mark, who muttered inwardly: "Quite a girl of the period after all! I imagined sentiment."

"While there's life there's hope, Mr. Streynsham," said Gwendolin.

"Blissful word!" said Mark, somewhat theatrically—he was great at charades and all kinds of acting. "Then might I dare to ask——"

"Not now, I think," interrupted Gwendolin, growing redder than the "red, red rose," and glancing backwards.

A quick, brisk step sounded behind. Mark felt it to be Mr. Madoc's. He lifted his hat, and hurried off in a contrary direction.

When Mark returned to the hotel that evening, hope—nay, certainty—in his heart, he was met by a waiter, who informed him that a gentleman was expecting him in the coffee-room.

"If it should be the governor!" he ejaculated.

Mark's "Governor" turned out to be a clergyman of grave but kindly appearance, whose voice quivered as he tried to say severely,

"What are you doing here, sir?"

Mark quailed as he stammered out something inaudible, and faced his father.

The Rev. Mark Streynsham was still a curate with a large family. It had been a joyful day when his eldest son, and namesake, had

obtained a clerkship in the Bank of England. One child, at least, had a provision for life, and he read over "Charles Lamb's Essays" on the strength of it. He had received a missive only the previous day to inform him that this provision was lost through the utter negligence of his son, and his contempt of orders and letters. He had been superseded.

If careless young men could realize beforehand the misery they entail on their families and themselves by one heedless act, they would assuredly grow thoughtful ere too late.

Mark had certainly not realized it.

"You will come home at once with me, sir. I have paid your bill. You have half an hour to spare," said his father.

To the credit of human nature let it be said, that Mark, whose heart was as loving as it was fickle, shed tears of genuine penitence as he entreated his father to forgive him. Still, he managed to write five lines to Miss Madoc to the effect that he was summoned unexpectedly away, but could not leave without making his adieux—temporary ones, he hoped—to the ladies.

Cuthbert had done all he could for Mark. He had made excuses of ill-health for him at the Bank, written to him almost daily letters which had scarcely been read and never answered, and ended in believing, as did the authorities, that he must have left Llanon. He had his own trials also. He had three brothers to be provided for somehow, and little or no interest to obtain work for them. His mother was not strong, and his eldest sister, who was, as he told Gwendolin, a daily governess, had more anxiety than was good for her. He considered himself the head of the family, and its weight was heavy on his shoulders.

He and Mark did not meet for some months, but he was surprised one evening by a visit from his old friend. He was in rampant spirits. He was going to make his fortune at last, and was off to South America in a few days. He should be rich as a Jew in no time, for he had only to show himself in the New World, and pick up gold as you picked up apples in his native county. He was going to write to Gwendolin, who, he was well assured, was desperately in love with him, and intended to return in a year or two, and marry her. "Whether her father will let me or no," he added in conclusion. As to his friends, they had forgiven him long ago, and began to acknowledge that he was not the sort of fellow for a desk. His father was with him in London, and quite as sanguine as he was about his future.

Cuthbert saw him on board ship, and tried to comfort his stricken father after witnessing their painful parting. The thoughtless Mark had brought much trouble on his family, and they could ill afford his outfit for his new life.

Some months after this, when Cuthbert was at his post in the Bank, Mr. Madoc came in. They recognized one another, and Mr. Madoc held out his hand.

"My daughter told me you were in a bank," he said, "but I did not know it was here. Where is your friend?"

Cuthbert said that he had gone abroad.

"The best thing he could do," said Mr. Madoc shortly. "I shall be glad to renew our acquaintance if you will call and see me. I am in town for a few months. I shall be in to-morrow at five thirty."

Cuthbert thanked him and took his address. A vision of Gwendolin came between him and his figures as he returned to his work, and Mr. Madoc proceeded to transact his business. Poor Cuthbert had never forgotten Gwendolin or her mountains.

He was in the West End punctually at the hour named by Mr. Madoc, who received him kindly. He saw no Gwendolin, and found, to his chagrin, that he owed the honour thrust upon him, rather to Mark's misdoings than his own merits. Mr. Madoc questioned him particularly concerning Mark, and he answered as cautiously as he could. It was evident that he had not won golden opinions from the banker, who appeared to suspect what had been passing at Llanon, and to be much annoyed by it.

Cuthbert was nettled at being made a sort of gutta percha figure which Mr. Madoc believed he could squeeze in and out at pleasure, so when he rose to go, he did so somewhat stiffly. This brought a demand for his address. Cuthbert gave his card. He lived in that neutral ground, Pimlico, and he well knew that his abode was somewhat different from the sumptuous mansion of his entertainer. The word is inapt, for he was not entertained. As he was ushered out by a gorgeous footman, he heard sounds of music, and wished much to see Gwendolin. He was disappointed, but as he had been bred up in disappointment he was not disheartened by it.

A few days afterwards, when he had reached his home, and was making himself comfortable for his six o'clock dinner, Mr. Madoc was announced. That gentleman found himself in a pretty, cheerful drawing-room, talking to a ladylike woman, her daughter, and a youth, her son.

It was just possible that he had come to patronize the young clerk, and to see what further impressions he could make upon his gutta-percha head, but he was disappointed, in his turn. He made a call and nothing more. Mrs. Noble spoke of his daughter, inquired for his sister, and said that Cuthbert had often talked of his pleasant fortnight among the Welsh mountains, and his chance meeting with them. But, meanwhile, her heart was throbbing with a wish that this rich man would give one of her boys a post in his bank. The under current of life and conversation is ever more troubled than the smooth waters of

the surface. Mr. Madoc did, in effect, ask the youth what he was doing, and received the straightforward answer, "Nothing, I am sorry to say, sir."

When Cuthbert came in, Mr. Madoc said casually, "I suppose that friend of yours, young Streynsham, is not likely to return to England?" "Certainly not at present," was Cuthbert's reply.

"He is well connected?"

"I believe so. His father is a clergyman."

The honour of the visit was soon over, and Cuthbert heard no more of Mr. Madoc for some time. But he received a letter from Mark full of glowing descriptions of the Pampas, and of the certain fortune he was on the eve of achieving. He had done nothing as yet of moment, but he was employed in the wild kind of way he liked, and was on the road to the gold-fields he was sure to find. An elegant little note was enclosed, directed to Miss Madoc, which Mark entreated Cuthbert, for the sake of their old friendship, to cause to be safely delivered to his twenty-thousand-pounder, the adorable Gwendolin.

Cuthbert was much annoyed: but, as we have said before, fortune favours the bold. A note arrived on the evening of the same day from Mr. Madoc, asking Cuthbert to call on him before he left town, in the course of that week. Cuthbert went the next day. Mr. Madoc was out, but he had left word that Mr. Noble should be asked to wait his return. While Cuthbert was turning over a book, Gwendolin came into the room. She was much surprised, and seemed pleased to see him again; but he lost all his self-possession, and no wonder, for he had Mark's note in his pocket. He seized the opportunity, and blurted out the request that had been made to him.

"You will excuse me, Miss Madoc, but I have received a letter from my friend, Mark Streynsham, enclosing one for you. I do not know whether I ought to give it you or not, but a friend's request is sacred, and if you think it right to take it without Mr. Madoc's knowledge, here it is."

Gwendolin blushed to her temples, and looked straight at Cuthbert with such flashing eyes that his fell before them. There was more of the Celt than the Saxon in her temperament.

"The letter is not for me. I consider your friend most audacious if he carries on this foolish flirtation under my cover, and so makes my father suspicious of me. If he, and—and—if they think proper to make simpletons of themselves, I do not. You can tell Mr. Streynsham so with my compliments."

"There must be a mistake," faltered Cuthbert. "He says Miss Gwendolin."

"My aunt's name is also Gwendolin. I wish her to have the precedence, and be considered Miss Madoc, because she is much older, and people are used to call me by my Christian name. If you

write, you cannot do so too strongly as regards me, and I positively decline to receive the letter. You may give it to Miss Madoc, if you think proper."

"Forgive me if I dare to suggest that Mark has been flattering himself that you——"

"Then he is very impertinent. I did not like him—I hate familiarity, and so does my father—and he could not have devoted himself to my aunt, and written her his unnecessary adieux, if he meant me. It was fortunate that they could not be acknowledged."

Gwendolin soon swept out of the room, leaving poor Cuthbert in despair. This was the only girl he had ever genuinely admired, and now she was offended with him. But perhaps it was for the best. Mr. Madoc came in shortly, and revived his spirits by asking him if his youngest brother would like to accept a vacant clerkship in one of his banks.

"It is not exactly the Bank of England, but it may lead to something better," he said. "I liked his manner—indeed I must say frankly, I liked you all."

Cuthbert had no words to express his thanks; but Mr. Madoc understood him, and shook him warmly by the hand when he wished him good-bye.

His brother Henry accepted the post, thankfully, and was soon installed at Llanon, where his only drawback was that he did not understand Welsh. However, he set himself to work to learn the language, much to his employer's satisfaction.

Cuthbert wrote Mark a detailed account of his interview with Gwendolin, and returned his note to her. He did not hear again for a year or more, when he received a letter filled with descriptions of strange adventures, successes, failures, and young ladies. He said he had found another twenty-thousand-pounder, a splendid Spanish girl, who was desperately in love with him. In a postscript he added that he was not yet reduced to so low an ebb as to take refuge in Gwendolin senior. When this extreme tidal depression should occur he would write again.

Time went on, and Cuthbert's prospects mended with it. An uncle, a Colonel Noble, returned from abroad, resolved to help him and his family; so that his young arms were less encumbered.

He went to pay a visit to his brother at Llanon, and to enjoy another brief holiday amongst the mountains. Mr. Madoc invited him to dinner; indeed, gave him a general invitation. He even became confidential.

"There is nothing like perseverance," he said. "It outweighs mere talent or genius. I have made my own fortune through it and nothing else, and I am interested in you, because you are of the true metal. It is natural to man to desire the very position he cannot attain, but

God's blessing seems to rest with him who does his best in the 'state of life in which He has been pleased to call him,' as our catechism says. School boards won't mend that, Mr. Noble! radical reformers though they may be. I like people who are content to appear what they are, and do not affect to be what they are not. When I was a poor boy—much poorer than you have ever been—I was not ashamed of my poverty; and now that I am a rich banker, I am not ashamed of having been a poor boy."

"Then, sir, I honour you from my heart," said Cuthbert emphatically, forgetful of all distinctions of age or position.

Mr. Madoc smiled, and the old man and the young understood each other.

Cuthbert felt that Gwendolin's manners were much more restrained than at their former meetings, and his grew distant accordingly. He supposed that the little episode of Mark had made her suspicious of clerks, and he was not one to overcome formality by freedom. Miss Madoc was also changed, and maintained a rigid politeness towards him. As there were two other guests, these little variations were more sensible than perceptible. In the course of the evening, however, he found himself near Gwendolin, and not being ready at the improvisation of little nothings, he took refuge in the photograph book. It opened naturally on her photograph.

"I have had another taken since that—still plainer, I think," she said, turning over a second book, and showing him a second photograph of herself, very pretty, but not so pretty as the original.

"Fair people never come out well," said Cuthbert. "This is——"

He wanted to say charming, but paused.

"Not beautiful, certainly," laughed Gwendolin.

Three or four years had certainly altered her. She was more stately and posée. So, at least, thought Cuthbert.

What a glorious day that was among the mountains," said he, rummaging his mind for a remark.

"Yes. I have never forgotten it," said Gwendolin, simply.

Cuthbert looked at her. Was she so stately and posée after all? He longed to say "Neither have I; my thoughts have lingered about it more than they ought," but he refrained. Mark would have called him a muff for his pains; but let that pass.

However, the frost melted, and he and Gwendolin were soon engaged in pleasant talk. We have all felt the mesmeric sympathy that draws us to some especial person, and, maybe, the mesmeric antipathy that repels us from another. In this instance it was the mesmerism of truth that attracted mutually. Cuthbert and Gwendolin were both truthful at heart, and if Mr. Madoc had formed grand plans for his daughter's future, he should have kept them apart, for they could no more help liking one another than the bee can help seeking honey from

the flower, and the flower yielding up her sweet. They met almost daily during that brief but happy fortnight, and their intercourse was unrestrained. Mr. Madoc was more short-sighted in Cuthbert's case than Mark's, and yet he watched him narrowly through his glasses.

The fallow-fields of fiction are ever broad-cast with love scenes. It may be well, sometimes, to leave a small plot of ground unsown either with wheat or tares, so that Imagination may have a corner to herself. Seek that corner, indulgent reader, and imagine the meetings and partings, the helps and hindrances, the resolves and scruples, the hopes and fears, the blushes and tears, of two young people attached to one another, yet not indifferent to parental pleasure or displeasure. We all know the struggle, but few the victory.

Cuthbert was about to leave Llanon, if not victorious, at least striving for conquest, not of Gwendolin, but himself. He had bidden her good-bye—he had seen a tear quiver on her eyelid—he had known that his own voice faltered—but he had not dared to utter the words of his heart. He had returned to his brother's lodging, and was awaiting his arrival. He was sitting with his elbows on the table, his face hidden in his hands.

"That is over!" he groaned aloud. "What a heaven it might have been had I been rich."

The door opened, and he felt a hand on his shoulder. He started, exclaiming,

"Oh, Harry! you are come at last!"

It was not Harry, but Mr. Madoc, who said: "What is all this? I find my Gwen in tears—I find you in heroics. What does it mean?"

Cuthbert rose, and facing Mr. Madoc, said, in a frank, manly voice, "I could not help it, sir. I will never come here again. I ought not to have come at all, for I knew that I must love her."

"Do you think me incapable of appreciating honour and truth?" said Mr. Madoc. "Must I pay the penalty of riches by being considered parsimonious and oblivious of my own origin? You are above me in all but money. Before all things I want a trusting, honourable husband for my child, who will make her happy. You have my permission to go and console my darling, and my blessing on the consolation."

A wild "Thank you—God bless you, sir," a bewildered awakening from what seemed a dream, a strong pressure of hands, and Cuthbert was gone.

Mr. Madoc smiled, somewhat sadly, and remembered his own youth.

ONLY FRIENDSHIP.

FROM THE GERMAN OF ELISE POLKO.

IV.

"H AVE you recovered from your longing after your home?" asked Ada the next day, as Hubert entered her house. "How I pitied you!"

"The longing has quickly flown," he laughed. "I meant this home; and I well knew that I should soon see it again."

"*This home!*" she repeated, and gazed at him in bewilderment. "I believed—I thought——"

"Please, please allow me to call this asylum by that name while I may pass its threshold; it has become a home to me."

An expression of radiant happiness flitted over Ada's face, but her lips remained dumb. She only nodded, and then bent low over her embroidery.

He had really found a home with her—this friend. What an enrapturing thought! And they, too, could rear a home for friendship. What a triumph!

The "world," in spite of its most critical observation, could find nothing to blame in the demeanour of these two persons, which was in full accordance with the most refined social forms. As the duke and duchess, as well as Frau von Waldheim, on every occasion paid the learned professor especial honour, gossiping tongues ventured no audible utterances, at least against the pair. Fortunately, there were plenty of little scandalous stories circulating in other quarters to compensate for this enforced silence.

It was a new life for Ada. Never before had she experienced in what an intoxicating way every enjoyment is heightened by the consciousness that there is one soul who fully shares it with us—that there is one being near us who comprehends our agitations as well as our raptures, and at the same moment is moved by like sensations. A mutual voyage it is, on an azure tide in a gently rocking bark—a voyage with closed eyes and clasped hands—upon a golden spring day or a moonlit summer night.

The little picture-gallery of the castle near the library was now carefully arranged, and Ada one day stood in astonishment before its accumulated treasures. They were mostly original creations out of the Flemish and Florentine schools; also many copies of celebrated portraits, and an unusually rich collection of hand-drawings and etchings from the most renowned Dutch, French, and Italian masters.

Hubert also led Frau von Waldheim into the library. There stood his green-covered working-table, heaped with lists, catalogues, and books

of all kinds. Against the walls stood huge carved presses, part arranged, part still empty. Great folios lay around upon the floor, and in the next room two servants were busy packing and unpacking boxes of books. Ada was charmed with this retreat.

"But what have these huge open books to do here, that swim like giants around the island of your writing-table?" she asked.

"These are my accomplices," answered Hubert; "extracts of all kinds are to be made from them, and the statistics they contain set in order. This very seriously retards me in my appropriate work, but I cannot demand a special assistant. Considerable patience is required, such as few possess."

"Nothing more?" She gazed, blushing and questioning, into his face. "Could you not employ me as assistant? I possess the gift of patience, and you know that I have nothing to do, and would gladly learn."

A beaming glance from his eyes met hers. "It might be harder for you than you imagine," he said. "The work has mostly to do with the arrangement of figures; and women, I think, hate or fear figures."

"Oh, I can do whatever I make up my mind to do, and I would gladly help you. Will you permit it?" Her eyes implored even more than her words.

"You forget that the Countess Helfeld has arranged a drive with you every forenoon at promenade hours, and that Count Ellern himself will drive——"

"Well, we can defer this until a later hour. Ellern is far too vain of his cavaliership not to be ready at any time to let his light shine before me."

"As you wish it, I accept your services," said the professor, with a beaming smile; "but your hand upon it, that you will tell me when you are weary of the work."

She laid her slender hand in his—he held it fast, bowed over the delicate fingers and kissed them.

How many lips had, in homage, touched this hand, and still it had never trembled. Now Ada suddenly trembled, and drew hastily back.

"When shall we begin?" she asked, with a somewhat unsteady voice. Her face had become pale, and she turned to the window.

"To-morrow—immediately—whenever it is agreeable to you," was the calm reply.

V.

ADA WALDHEIM not only assisted her learned friend, but with that energy which awakes in the weakest woman when some powerful emotion drives her on. She devoted herself to figures, once her deadly enemies. Hubert regarded her with mingled feelings of sympathy and

surprise. The folios, by his direction, had been laid upon a wide table, which had been moved near the stove—a comfortable arm-chair stood before it. There she sat every forenoon, the tall, slender woman, in her grey, almost nun-like dress, the little feet resting upon an old chronicle, her fine intellectual head bent over the books, a pen in her charming hand, and noted, copied, and revised. From time to time, when a sheet was filled, she rose, and with almost noiseless steps went to him, to lay her work upon his table.

The frame of this magnificent apartment was just suited to these two figures which it now enclosed. There are figures of which we cannot think amid narrow surroundings—to which the noblest apartments seem of right to belong. If we meet them in low, narrow chambers in straitened circumstances, we gaze upon them with the same deep sympathy as upon prisoners.

The scholar's grave forehead rose from his work when Ada approached the writing-table; he nodded thankfully—somewhat as a tender brother would to a beautiful sister—but he did not speak. And she did not seem to expect this. She did not linger—she answered his silent thanks with a sunny smile, and went back to her work. As she slowly glided along, he followed her with his eyes; and it was so still in the broad library-hall that he heard the rustle of the woman's trailing dress as it swept over the floor.

It was as if Ada's and Hubert's relations had taken a still deeper form upon this neutral ground, at this common work. Until now, he had only been her guest, or, with her, the guest of others; but here she stood, in a certain sense, upon his territory, under his special protection.

"Never has it been more evident to me that we are good friends, and nothing but good friends, than in these quiet hours in the library-hall," she wrote to Marie. "Could lovers ever be in a frame of mind to work together in this way? Sometimes, indeed—for we are not so persevering as men—I would like to rest and to talk *con amore*, and I secretly wish that he would just happen to lay down his pen. I sometimes catch his eyes and think I read the same wish in their glance; but we work on.

"It makes me so happy that I can save him a little work through my assistance. There will be an emptiness in my life when this activity ceases. Never, no, never in my marriage did I have the feeling of being really useful—of helping; the hours, in spite of all outside occupation, were 'all too many'; only my outward self was engaged as companion, nurse, housekeeper—my inner self could go wherever it chose. Who asked after it?

"Now the days fly on with arrowy swiftness; there is continually something to think of, to care for, to expect; and those regular carriage-drives with the Countess Helfeld, commenced some days ago, seem a

waste of time. I have really much to do, dearest Marie. Ellern drives out in very elegant style, and likes to be admired. Upon Sylvester-evening there is a masked ball at the duke's. Ellern has taken up the Polonaise; you know I no longer dance round dances. He has of late adopted all sorts of strange whims, sends me bouquets, takes singing-lessons, pays court to me out of ennui, and is my shadow at every concert and theatre, and no longer so amusing as formerly. Perhaps he will make the lady of his heart somewhat jealous. Hubert lately declared that he had an expression around the mouth which betrayed an unhappy love. I laughed heartily at him; Max Ellern and a real *affaire du cœur*! *Love*, I must not say, the word is too beautiful. I shall not disclose my mask to you, you might be in secret correspondence with him; you are both too much delighted with each other; I cannot trust you."

"And you really believe you would recognize me there in any costume?" Ada asked Hubert, one day.

He looked at her and only smiled. It was a proud, mysterious smile, more eloquent than words.

"Well, no other answer? You appear to be very certain in this matter."

"Certain of this one thing, at least, as of no other in the world."

"Confident even to arrogance, after the manner of men."

"This time with full right, I hope."

"We shall see," she laughed.

She was so charming when she laughed. Her tones were silvery as those of a child, and over her face flitted something of the careless happiness of youth.

"I would I could oftener see you so merry," he said, with deep feeling. "Your laugh reveals that you were born for the sunshine and the blue sky."

"As we all are in the main, I think."

"I scarcely believe it. It is with men as with plants. All cannot bear the clear sunlight. It is just so with us. Since I knew you, I have sometimes had the feeling that you have been placed in the shadow, when all your aspirations and longings were for the light."

"I have now the light which I need. I have work, and I have found a true friend and adviser. For what better could I wish? I hope you do not any longer pity me."

Her lips sought to smile, but her eyes were moist; excitement and emotion overpowered her; a chaos of painful remembrances whirled around her. In spite of her entreaty not to pity her, that dangerous sentiment crept in, a nameless sympathy with herself. Ada knew not how it happened, but her head sank against the arm of the chair, she covered her face with her hands, and broke out into impassioned weeping.

In a moment he stood by her side. What he said as he bent over her, with that soft, trembling tone of voice, she did not understand; she heard only the sound—but it had upon her as beneficent an effect as her mother's voice had once exercised. Unresisting, she gave him the hand he ventured to touch; but she turned away her face from him. The slender fingers trembled passionately in his grasp, but the fervid anguish that had just overwhelmed her had vanished; she breathed freely, as if relieved of a heavy burden.

"This is the blessing of friendship," she murmured. "How calm I have become!" And as he did not answer, but only the more firmly clasped her hand, she added: "I was very childish. Forgive me; I will be so no more." And upon that face, flooded with tears, a smile already struggled with the sadness as the sun with dark clouds, and she timidly raised her eyes to him, for he was still silent. She met his glance resting upon her with a strange expression, and saw the deep pallor which covered his cheeks. It was such a glance as she had never before met, and she trembled.

How overpowering it is, as nothing else in this world, the first glance of a passion of which we feel that the hour might come when we shall return it! It is as if we received a death wound, as if we had been made prisoner against our will. Perhaps the drowning one, swept along by the rapid current, before the last great struggle repeats the words, "*I am lost*," with the same shudder as we say them to ourselves in that moment when we meet the first glance of a great passion. Under the charm of this glance we are entirely powerless; we bow before a something whose might we but dimly realize; the struggle against this power comes later.

"Let me go!" fell almost inaudibly from Ada's lips.

He that instant let go her hand, and turned back to his place; and as Miss Jenny appeared upon the threshold with her "*Tea is ready*," Hubert had already begun a sonnet of Shakspeare's, and Ada rolled her embroidery together; the strange, brooding tempest had flown.

VI.

It was the Christmas Eve—that most blessed time for the happy, that saddest for the unhappy. Ada was alone. She had never, since her husband's death, accepted an invitation for that evening, but received company at home, as Herr von Waldheim had so well liked to do. The light of the Christmas-tree blinded her eyes with tears in remembrance of her father's house, and in consciousness of her solitude. It was her custom to make liberal presents to her servants, and to heap up a table for Miss Jenny, covered with all things her faithful companion had secretly wished for—but no lighted tree glowed in her house.

And this time it was just as it had always been—the hours for

making presents were over—the recipients had thankfully kissed the bountiful hand of their benefactress—Miss Jenny had gone to church—Ada sat at the piano without touching the keys. Sunken in deep dreams, she bowed her head. But it was not remembrances that held her in thrall as usual—she was filled with an impatient longing after her friend—from whom she to-day had not heard a syllable.

Ada now walked to the window, and gazed down into the garden. All was still and white, and the stars beamed down with a quiet lustre. In the neighbouring house illuminated windows threw their glitter far out upon the snow, and through the air toned the bells, with their holy song,

“Peace on earth !”

Peace—full, deep peace—ah, who might have it? Ada’s fancy painted picture upon picture—her thoughts stirred not from her friend. What if he should now bring his wife to her? An icy shudder crept over her—she felt her heart stop beating. The bell rang. She was so much frightened that she cried out. The servant entered. “No, no, I will see no one !” she exclaimed, and waved the servant away.

“It is only the Herr Professor,” said the old woman, in surprise.

“Is he alone?”

“Yes—no : he has something in his hand, and his servant Franz is with him, and Miss Jenny has just come from church——”

“Welcome, welcome !” she interrupted, drawing a sigh of relief. “Welcome !” she repeated, more animatedly and with the sunniest smile, as Hubert a moment after stood before her. It was as if a thousand joyful voices cried within her soul, “She is not with him !”

He brought her a bouquet of roses.

“Roses in winter !” she said, in glad surprise, and pressed her face against the fragrant flowers. “No one has ever before given me roses at Christmas.”

“So I also thought at sight of those roses which two dear hands have sent me to-day,” he said. “But I must take this dear gift in my keeping, all aglow with the Christmas light, else it will fail in the true consecration. These roses here are also destined to bloom anew under the Christmas-tree. Please, please to permit it !”

She nodded.

“May I also, for a little time, send you into banishment, and close the portière of this boudoir behind you ?”

“You may !”

When she again found herself alone, oh, what a different solitude was it from that just before ! She heard his firm step go up and down—heard the whisper of various voices, and a perfume sweeter than roses pressed in liquid waves over to her—the perfume of the fir-tree. He was evidently in a complot with Jenny.

Her heart swelled with sorrow and with joy. Had she again become

a child, and was she at home awaiting the call of father and mother, who should disclose to her the magnificence of the Christmas-tree? She felt herself no longer forsaken, solitary, joyless—in there, a few steps away, were those who cared for her—there was one who at this moment guarded and loved her, as they at home in the paternal house had watched over and loved her; and she delivered herself fully and entirely to this intoxicating sensation—she enjoyed, woman-like, the moment, without a thought of the next hour.

Ada had never looked happier than on that Christmas Eve before the little fir tree, which, adorned with all kinds of charming trifles, appeared as poetic as those in her father's house; under its boughs lay favourite books for which she had secretly wished, water-colour paintings out of Rome from Hubert's own hand—and roses bloomed.

What a happy evening! Ada had never seen a more joyful one. They remained together, they jested and laughed like children. Miss Jenny herself, in seeing her mistress so merry, looked ten years younger. As they separated, Ada again pressed her glowing forehead against the window-panes; but a deep joy thrilled her, like the echo of a sweet melody.

VII.

"You would hear of the Sylvester festival, my Marie," wrote Ada, in the last days of January, "and wonder that I have not told you of it before. I have no excuses for my silence, other than a kind of horror of writing which possesses me. I was going to write to you that I have been too much occupied; but if I remember rightly, my days flew very regularly; I seldom went out, for I had, and still have, a cold. Our friend entertained me better than any society, for which I am very thankful to him.

"He really danced at the masked ball, and I assure you that he takes dancing just as seriously as all else he does; his dancing is distinguished, his carriage remarkable. Through his influence—hear it and be astonished—I really let myself be led through a long waltz. One has here, as in everything else, the feeling of fullest security in regard to him; I could think of no position in life where, if he were near me, a feeling of fear would intrude.

"I looked forward with great expectation to the festival; it was the first masked ball I ever attended. As a girl, I did not learn to know its pleasures, and, as a woman, I frequented no balls. It is no wonder that all sorts of confused images of such a festival peopled my brain. I thought of the glowing descriptions of the masked balls of Venice—I mused upon a maze of enchanting woman forms, upon mysterious dominoes, black lace veils and beautiful eyes, upon a whispering and a rustling, upon an atmosphere of perfume, upon a stream of passionate excitements, on whose surging waves one floated onward against his will.

Happiness and sorrow wore the same guise—the heart must speak under its protecting veil, love and hate betray each other.

“Ah, it was other than I dreamed! Insipid, sombre, cold, appeared to me all that I saw; I alone seemed excited, I alone trembled, I alone seemed to wait for some one. I had chosen the costume of a Venetian lady of Titian's time. My mask attracted much attention. I believe your Ada looked as well as possible in her green dress embroidered with gold, and the pearl net for her hair. Hubert wore a black domino. We recognized each other at the first glance, and I was so happy in being able to place myself under his protection.

“The Countess Helfeld, pompous in an ancient French costume, and Count Ellern, a stately Maltese knight, took me to the ball. Ellern rather spoiled my evening by making me a formal proposal. I was so frightened that I did not give him a decided answer. The next day I wrote him my calm, determined no, and informed him of my decision to remain unmarried.

“The whole affair excited me more than it deserved. I communicated it to Hubert when all was over. It seemed to me that he became deadly pale as I told him. Ellern and his sister have gone to W—— to remain some time. I found their farewell cards two days after the ball. The count added a few passionate lines, in which he declared that he would wait for a change in my mind, and this he seemed confidently to hope. I have shown Hubert this letter.

“As he read my reply he looked at me and asked: ‘And you will really hold fast to this conclusion?’

“‘Without doubt. How could I, without love, sacrifice my freedom? And I do not long for love: freedom and friendship—this is all I desire.’

“‘For all time?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘You are right! It is the life of rest and peace.’”

VIII.

AND the weeks passed on—yes, they flew. Hubert had fixed the day of his departure. He was needed in M——. Letter after letter came—the next Monday morning he would set out.

Ada saw him less than usual in these last days. There were many things for him to settle and arrange; and he was several times invited to dine with the duke. Parting visits occupied his time—perhaps his thoughts were at home already; he seemed strangely absent. Conversation often ceased, and Ada and Hubert sat opposite each other in silence. When he read, his voice sounded monotonous as never before and his listener felt that his thoughts were far from the words.

It was a sad, strange communion, and still on neither side would

they shorten it a second, and longed for it anew from day to day; and so it came on at last—the separation.

To-morrow morning she expected him for the last time—this friend: they would then take leave of each other, practise their music together once more—then all would be over; then the time would come which she had once looked forward to with so much joy—the time for correspondence by letter with an intellectual man.

Why did she rejoice no more? Why this tormenting unrest at thought of separation, this mighty anguish that rent her breast, this pain which ever and ever again drove the tears into her eyes?

What then did she lose? So she asked herself a thousand times. And the answer came: "The spell of a personal communion—nothing more." All else remained as it had been. How weak she was—how bitterly she chided, even derided herself! The might of habit was all! A few days full of disquiet, and then all these unnatural emotions would have flown; then she could enjoy the happiness of pure friendship.

Ada rose, at length, in the grey of the early morning twilight. The expression of her eyes was strangely changed, the pallor of her face was frightful, an unusual expression of passionate energy quivered around the delicate, firmly-closed lips. It was as if this night had brought to her the disclosure of a momentous secret. She hastened to her writing table. She shuddered as if in a fever chill. "Only a few lines, and the bounds are set for all time," she murmured. But the hand trembled, and changed the character's so as to be scarce recognizable, as she wrote:

"COUNT ELLERN,—I pray you return! I would atone for a wrong. You are right; it is cruel to let a heart suffer which loves us. You love—
—you offer me heart, hand, and life! I, at that time, said to you that I should never marry—it was but a foolish caprice that led me so to speak! A feeling of deathlike solitude has come over me. He leaves me to-day, my friend, my teacher, my all! I shall never see him again. But I cannot live on, solitary and useless. I, too, will have a home, and make one being happy! You beg me to try to love you! I will—certainly I will! Have only patience with me! Come back; I will be your bride! I am ill and deathly weary, but you will have patience, for—you love me!"
"ADA."

She enclosed the lines in her portfolio—she had become more calm—the last day of their association should find her strong.

The last day! Can a man dream of the torture this word may awake? We repeat it to ourselves at every step, amid every occupation, this one word, "To-day is the last day!" To-morrow you may, perhaps, be doing this same work again, but one who was with you will be far away! How thoughts of this to-morrow cling to you—the last day of your being together! How, with every hour, the signification

of this word becomes more weighty ; how it oppresses us as a burden, until we can scarcely breathe—with what fearful rapidity the hours flit past us, as we number them in mortal anguish, and seek to deceive and to console ourselves by saying, "It is still long before this to-morrow comes, when all is so empty !"

Oh, this to-morrow ! Like the eye-sockets from a skull, it stares at us ; like an open grave, in which they would bury us alive ! We have only one wish and one longing : to sleep deep and sound—on and on—and to wake only at the day of judgment—or never !

IX.

How sunny it looked, the world upon this day of separation, for it was spring. The windows toward the garden stood open, and that balsamic air which heals us from so many wounds, and that light which does not dazzle even eyes dim with weeping, streamed in with prodigal fullness. The first green smiled—the first modest flowers which we so joyfully salute, and so soon forget amid the roses, gave forth their fragrance ; and confiding human hearts again believed in happiness.

Ada's eyes, too, became brighter ; there still lay one day before her, with the usual blest anticipation of a charming evening. What a rich gift ! She felt herself in the sunshine, again strong and courageous. Ah, we are often so in the morning, and how weak and despairing the hours find us,

"When the shadows darken !"

Never part at evening. The heaviest trials must always be demanded of us in the morning—parting and dying.

Miss Jenny enveloped Ada in a great blue shawl, as she late in the afternoon declared her intention of going down into the garden ; and she sent Hubert, who to-day came unusually early, to her mistress with the request not to remain long outside.

She gazed calmly after the professor. She said to herself that he would, better than any one else in the world, care for Ada. But he had either misunderstood or forgotten her request, or Frau von Waldheim was obstinate, as, alas, alas ! she sometimes was, for they both walked side by side, up and down the wide path, calmly and incessantly, as if there were no monitress in the whole world. Now, indeed, he offered her his arm, and she leaned upon him—not to turn back to the house, but to walk on, only now and then pausing at the little bush where, every evening, a nightingale sang.

"I will take her down a mantle, if she does not come in soon. How imprudent they both are !" muttered Miss Jenny, with a shake of the head.

The good woman might have carried down many mantles ; for these two remained long in the garden, and a little hand which rested on a

man's arm trembled violently—it felt the mighty beatings of a heart. They spoke hastily together in whispers, as if it was a secret they had to communicate ; but it was still of every-day things they talked.

During the conversation, their eyes sometimes met in a hasty glance, shy and ardent alike, and intruded another speech—then words would cease for awhile. Twilight came—the moon arose, the nightingale sang even more entrancingly. Yes, Miss Jenny was right—they were very imprudent, these two !

The evening coolness might perhaps have made the faces so pale which, later, sat opposite each other in the glow of the lamp. Portfolios with water-colour drawings were brought—they bent over the leaves—there were many things to ask and to explain ; but it strangely happened that many questions were twice asked, and many explanations were adapted to another page.

The last evening—the last evening !

During the tea-hour it was also otherwise than usual—how hasty were question and answer ; how far-fetched the themes of conversation—they spoke of all things else, but not of the journey and the separation.

“ Shall we have music ? ” asked Hubert, at length.

“ We ? I would, this evening, beg only to listen.”

And seated in a window-niche, buried in deep shadow, she saw as in a dream how he took his place at the piano—“ for the last time,” a voice within her cried.

“ What shall I play ? ”

“ Do not ask to-night,” was her only reply.

And he played Beethoven's “ *Les adieux et le retour*,”—that heart-rending, parting salutation, with all its agony, with all its passion, with all its consolation.

As the last tone died away there was no sound in the music-room—it was so still that one could hear the quick breathing of the player, who now bent his head over the music-stand. Outside, the nightingale sang louder and louder ; everywhere there was a mysterious ebbing and flowing ; the spirit of love, in the form of a blessed spring night, was abroad upon the earth.

Ada rose and stepped to the piano. She laid her hand lightly upon her friend's shoulder ; out of her eyes gazed a world full of anguish—the passionate fold in the centre of her forehead was so sad and deep—the lips quivered. “ I have something more to confess,” she whispered, scarce audibly. “ Here, read this sheet ; I wrote it this morning to Count Ellern. Friendship allows no secrets from its object. You can no more be with me. I would not live solitary. I think—of betrothing myself.”

He raised his head and stared at her. As in a dream he took the sheet from her hand. Then he read. A beaming rapture passed over

his face, his eyes sparkled. "No longer solitary—never, never more solitary!" he said, at length; "neither of us!"

"Go now," she implored; "leave me—I wish it!"

"Do you really wish it, Ada?"

How unpitifully his eyes repeated this passionate question; how it thrilled her to hear her name from his lips!

"Yes, I must wish it! Go, Hubert," she added, breathlessly; "we have stood the trial; we have become friends, have we not? Let us remain only friends. So it must be! Go, now—farewell!"

"Ada, do you not then see that we cannot separate from each other?"

A cry of anguish and of rapture—a half-stifled sob. Ada sank upon her knees. She knew that she loved this man from whom she would flee in deathly anguish—the man who this moment held her in his arms; she knew that she was loved as she had never until now been loved. All else was obliterated, save this one feeling—how every fibre of her being longed for him. Her head sank upon his breast. Then, remembering, she strove to disengage herself, murmuring: "Go, Hubert, go. This is sin."

"It is no sin, you foolish, dearly-loved child," answered an idolized voice, firmly, convincingly, as if an angel had spoken. She looked up to him—questioning, trembling, hoping. "It is no sin, I tell you, to give and to take. I may receive the gift of your love in sight of all the world, and in return I can give you full love, a whole life and being. Ada, forgive me—Marie was with me in a plot against you, and for you. I have never, never belonged to any woman but you—science alone was my grave, strict companion—you have never had another rival than she. But how stands it with my rival? Shall I send the letter to the count?"

How happy—how arrogant—how conscious of victory he looked!

She flung her arms around his neck, wordless, dissolved in happy tears.

Close and closer he drew the delicate form to his breast.

"'Only freedom and friendship,' Ada?" he now asked, softly, yet in a tone of deep, passionate tenderness.

No, no, and eternally no!—bondage and love!



THE ORIGIN OF THE ROSE.

EXALTED from ancient times to the position of the "queen of flowers," which the rose is still admitted to occupy in spite of many splendid introductions which our gardens have received during the last few years, it is natural to suppose that we should find it taking a prominent part in the popular myths and traditions of the various nations who have held it in honour. The number of such stories in connection with the origin of the rose alone is very considerable, especially when we take into account several which may be traced to their source in the works of comparatively recent writers, and are on that account of less interest. To a few of the more noticeable among them we would now direct attention.

Among the Greek and Latin poets, some have dedicated the rose to Cupid, and others to his mother, who transcended in beauty all her rivals, just as the rose excels all flowers in its combined charms of graceful form, lovely colour, and exquisite perfume. Theocritus tells us that the rose was formerly white, but that it was changed to red by the blood of Venus, which fell upon it from her thorn-pierced feet when she rushed to the rescue of Adonis from the attacks of the boar.* Another author would trace it to the blood of Adonis himself; and this legend, as we shall see farther on, was adopted into what we may call Christian mythology in mediæval times.

The rose was also dedicated to Aurora, to the Graces, and to Harpocrates, the God of Silence, the reason for which is not at first sight apparent; it may, however, have been intended to denote that the pleasures and sentiments of love should be dwelt upon in the heart, rather than made a topic of conversation and publicity. Hence the rose itself came to be regarded as the emblem of silence; we still speak of any secret undertaking as performed *sub rosa*, or "under the rose;" and the old custom of suspending a rose above the table at banquets, as an intimation that what transpired in conversation was not to be repeated, will be remembered in connection with this expression, which it doubtless originated. Haydn, in the "Dictionary of Dates," would trace its origin to "the circumstance of the Pope presenting consecrated roses, which were placed over confessionals to denote secrecy;" but we have met with no reference to their consecration or use for the purpose referred to. Newton, in 1587, speaks of the hanging of roses over the tables "in parlours and dining-rooms" as "a common country custom;" and Peacham, in 1638, says that they were painted in this position "as well in England as in the Low Countries." Possibly the

* Thus Spenser says:—

"White as the native rose before the change
Which Venus' blood did in her leaves impress."

plaster ornaments called "roses," which we see in the centre of our ceilings, may be traced to this origin. This symbolism of the rose doubtless led to its being employed, with the cross, as the badge of the Rosicrucians.

Bacchus is another deity who was connected with the rose ; and here again we see a reason for its signification of silence, in connection with the revels with which this god was honoured, and over which he was supposed to preside. According to Anacreon, the rose was dyed with nectar by the gods when it was first created ; and another myth says that Cupid, while leading the dances on Olympus, overturned a vase of nectar, the contents of which, falling to the earth, changed the hue of the formerly white blossom to red. This is thus referred to by Herrick :—

" 'Tis said, as Cupid danced among
The gods, he down the nectar flung ;
Which, on the white rose being shed,
Made it for ever after red."

The God of Love is also connected with the origin of the rose in the story which tells how his mother, incensed at the many troubles which he had caused her, chastised him with a branch from a white rose-bush, and that so severely that she caused the blood to flow from his tender body ; and from this came the first red rose.

Other legends, perhaps of more modern invention, but still connected with the deities of classical times, may be found in various books, especially in French works of the renaissance period, and even later. One of these tells how a maiden, by name Roselia, was devoted from her cradle to Diana, but her mother, with mistaken affection, withdrew her from the temple, that she might be united to a handsome prince named Cymedorus. The hymeneal ceremony concluded, Cymedorus, fearing the vengeance of the goddess, hastened to remove his bride from the temple ; but before they had passed its limits, they were perceived by Diana, who at once struck with death her faithless and unfortunate devotee. Cymedorus, transported with grief, threw himself upon the body, but embraced only a shrub covered with thorns. This shrub, born of the revenge of Diana and the tears of love, was clothed with fragrant blossoms which received the name of the unhappy Roselia, and preserved the memory of her transformation. Another story, which we find in the works of Rapin, a celebrated French Jesuit of the seventeenth century, tells us how a certain Queen of Corinth, named Rhodanthe, of extraordinary beauty, had inspired many princes with affection, which, however, she did not reciprocate. Three of these, enraged at her refusal to listen to their addresses, pursued her to the temple of Apollo and Diana, where she had taken refuge, followed by all the people, who were so infatuated by her loveliness that they wished to place her upon the altar where stood the statue of the goddess. Apollo,

indignant at the insult thus offered to his sister, changed Rhodanthe into the shrub which bears roses. Under this new form she is still queen, for she has become the most beautiful of flowers ; while her subjects, crowded round her, seem still to defend her, metamorphosed as they are into sharp thorns. The three princes were transformed, one into a butterfly, the others into winged insects, which, constant in their affections, hover continually around the object of their love.

Yet one more legend, before we leave the pagan divinities. Bacchus was pursuing a nymph, who, tripping lightly over the flowers, looked round at him and laughed scornfully at his futile attempts to overtake her. While doing so, her robe became entangled in a thorn-bush, and ere she could disentangle herself, her pursuer had overtaken her. When she recognized him, she blushed and cast down her eyes ; and Bacchus, in admiration of her blushes, and in recognition of the service which the bush had rendered him, caused it to put forth blossoms which should recall by their colour the glowing hue of her cheeks.

Turning now to the rose-traditions of Eastern nations, we may note the reverence paid to the rose by the Turks, who believe it to have sprung from the sweat, or, as some say, from the blood of Mohammed. If a Turk sees a rose lying upon the ground he picks it up, and having respectfully raised it to his lips, deposits it in some safe place, where it will be preserved from profanation. The followers of Zoroaster believe that prior to the introduction of the evil principle into the world, roses had no thorns, a notion which we also find referred to by St. Basil, who had probably met with it in some of their works. They also believed that the rose was under the protection of a powerful genie. Tavernier says that "the Ghebers believe that when Abraham, their great prophet, was thrown into the fire by order of Nimrod, the flames turned instantly into a bed of roses, whereon the child sweetly reposed." Thus another Eastern tradition asserts the "burning bush," in which the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, to have been a rose-tree.

Christianity has contributed its quota to the legends of the rose ; but they are too well known to require more than a passing note. Corresponding with a heathen myth already mentioned, is the tradition which tells us that a white rose grew at the foot of the cross, and that the blood of the Redeemer falling upon it changed the colour of its blossoms and originated the red rose. The red and white roses found in the tomb of the Virgin after her assumption ; those sent by St. Dorothy from the heavenly garden ; the institution of the Rosary, the prayers on which were symbolized by red and white blossoms ; their connection with St. Elizabeth of Hungary ; and many more of like nature are familiar to most of us. Nor need we do more than refer to the "Wars of the Roses," and their legendary origin as given by Shakspeare. Such matters are of comparatively modern date ; and have scarcely the same claims upon our attention as those hallowed by antiquity.—JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S.

TRICKS AT NIGHT.

"TURN off the gas at the main, Ruth."

We were standing in the drawing-room, bed candles in hand, as Mr. Dunn advanced to the top of the stairs and called this order out, after ringing the bell. He waited there until the answer came up again.

"Jenkins has turned it off, sir."

Mr. Dunn stepped back into the room, and watched the chandelier. The four lights became dim, and then went gradually out, one after the other. Upon that, Mr. Dunn turned the little tap of each safely off, touched the foot of the chandelier, and sent it up as high as it would go towards the lofty ceiling.

"I never go to bed without knowing that the gas is secure," he observed to me and my husband, in explanation. "At half-past ten exactly it is put out at the main. We are ten minutes later to-night on account of your being here."

"And the hall lamp?—and the other lights in the house?" I asked, very much interested on the subject of the gas.

"The hall lamp is always put out before I call, also the burners in Mr. Mowbray's room. Our servants have been with us so long that they are as methodical as we are; everything goes on like clock-work."

"We have been particular about the gas since an accident that happened next door," said Mrs. Dunn. "A poor little child was so much burnt that it died."

"How was that?"

"It slept with the governess. A servant had lighted the gas in the room when the child went to bed, and left it burning: which was an unusual thing to do in the house—in fact, against rules; but the winter's night was cold and the room was cold, and she did it for the child's comfort. When the governess went to bed, the gas had been turned off at the main, consequently the room was in darkness, and she knew nothing of its having been turned on—"

"And the maid forgot it, careless hussy!" interjuncted Mr. Dunn.

"Close upon this, the servants, for some purpose of their own, surreptitiously turned the gas on again at the main, and neglected to turn it off again. Towards morning the governess awoke, three parts stifled with the smell in the chamber. She lighted a candle to see what it meant, and the escaped gas in the room caught fire. The window was blown out, the bed-curtains took fire, and she and the child were badly burnt. The little one died."

"I should not turn the gas off at the main at all," said my husband.

"Wouldn't you, though!" cried Mr. Dunn. "You'd have your servants burning it all night in their rooms for the sake of the warmth: and a pretty expense that would be! Unwholesome, too. I don't like gas laid on in bed-chambers, for my part. It is only on in one in this house; and that's where you and Mrs. Wyatt are going to sleep. Some invalid had occupied that room, I believe, during the former tenancy. We have never lighted it up."

"Just a moment, Mr. Dunn, please," said I, as they were moving to the door. "What do you mean by turning it off at the main?"

Mr. Dunn stared at me through his spectacles, amazed at my ignorance.

"Why, *don't* you know?" he exclaimed. "When you turn the gas off at the main, it cuts it off from all the pipes in the house. You could not light any of the burners; there's no gas in the pipes, you understand, to light. You saw it die out in these burners when I called out to the servants. It was because Jenkins had turned it off at the main."

"We will take you on a tour to the lower regions to-morrow, Mrs. Wyatt, and you shall see the apparatus," laughed Catherine Massingham, Mrs. Dunn's sister. "It is in the coal-cellar."

It was all very well to laugh at me—as I told Robert up stairs. But if they had lived for years and years out of the civilized world as we had, they might have been as ignorant as I. A stupid little continental sea-side place, about a hundred years behind the time; where no gas was ever seen, save in the streets and the large hotel, and perhaps in the long-room of the custom house. Business had obliged Mr. Wyatt to visit England, and he brought me with him, leaving the children at home. It was arranged that we should take up quarters for the time with our intimate and life-long friends, the Dunns. They lived in a quiet street amid other lawyers, in the heart of London. The house was of a very good size; the rooms were large and lofty, but to my mind dingy. The entrance floor was taken up with offices; the kitchens were below; the first floor contained the drawing and dining-rooms, and above were the bed-chambers.

Our room was commodious and comfortable. The first thing I did when we got up stairs was to look for the gas pipes. There they were, one on each side the large window: two long iron pipes with a joint in the middle, but no glass burners at the end. They could be pulled out straight to light up the dressing-table, or turned at right angles, or left doubled up flat against the wall.

"I'm glad of one thing, Robert—that we have no gas to explode at home. I should live in dread all the while we are away of a letter arriving to say the house and children were blown up."

"Nonsense, Nelly!"

"I'm sure I should. As Mr. Dunn says, I'd never have gas laid on in a bed-chamber."

He was tugging at the strap of his portmanteau, and made no reply. I had my fascinated gaze on the pipes.

"Robert!"

"Well?"

"I wish you'd just see whether these things will *not* light—as they say. I don't half like sleeping with them in the room."

"You are as silly as your baby Nelly that you've left at home."

"Yes, I know I am. Do try, Robert."

Lifting himself up from the trunk, he came, half cross, half laughing. Turning the little tap, he lighted a match, and tried. No; there was no gas there to burn.

"You see, don't you, you stupid child!"

"But I suppose, Robert, there's no surety that the servants will not turn on the gas again if they want to?—as was the case with those servants in the next house."

"I suppose not," said he, equably.

"Are you sure you've turned it back all right, Robert?"

"No, I've left it all wrong—that we may be blown up, you know, if the gas gets the chance to do it."

"Where's the use of jesting?"

"I'd advise you to undress, Nelly, unless you wish to sit up all night. You must be tired, I should think, after the delights of that precious boat! I know I am."

I am particularly afraid of fire. And so would you be, perhaps, had you shaken hands with a friend in the morning, and had news that he was burnt to death at night. But, before that, even when a child, I was always afraid of it. Whether it was that constitutional timidity manifesting itself, or the excitement of being in old England once again, and with these long-parted-from friends, or their strong tea taken late, or the strange bed, certain it was that I could not get to sleep. There was none of it in my eyes. I lay wide awake, and got at last into a regular state of nervousness. Many a one knows what it is.

Was that gas safe? *Had* the servants relighted it? Had Robert in his careless jesting been *sure* he turned the tap? Did I not smell it? Putting my head up and sniffing fifty times, putting it down and sniffing fifty more, I came to the conclusion that I did not. Would it not be as well to see that all was safe? Of course this idea, once admitted, had to be acted upon. As I say, you probably know quite well what it is.

Gliding out of bed, so as not to disturb Robert, I got to the dressing-table, and felt about for the match-box. After overturning a pink toilette bottle, and pricking my hand with a sticking-up pin, I found it. Striking a light, I pulled the pipe forwards, turned the tap, and—

Good heavens ! before the match had well touched it, a flame shot up amidst a frightful hissing and fizzing. To say that I was startled would not be saying enough : I was frightened as I had hardly ever been frightened in my life before. Though foolish enough to try it, I had no more expected the gas would light, than I expected I should.

"Robert !" I cried, making one bound to the bed. "Robert !"

Robert, the lightest sleeper in the world in general, only gave a grunt, and turned.

"Robert, Robert !" I cried in an agony. "Wake up. The gas is alight."

"What in the world's the matter with you, Nelly ? Don't bother."

"Look at it flaring ! We shall both be burnt ! Look at it !"

"Can't you let a fellow lie still ?"

"The gas, the gas ! Robert, it's my fault. Oh, get up ! Look at the gas !"

"Well," said he, in his lazy way, as he took a good long look, "it won't hurt. Makes the room light and jolly."

He got out of bed though, and turned it partially down, so that it no longer fizzed and hissed. I told him how it all was, and he called me the greatest goose that ever went on legs. Then he sat down with a prolonged laugh. Which I resented.

"I am laughing at Dunn," he said. "He thinks he has got such trustworthy servants. I daresay they have a game at high jinks every night."

"But, Robert, is there danger ?"

"Danger ! No. See, I turn it off perfectly safe," he cried, getting up to the pipe again. "You may go to sleep in peace. Half the London people keep the gas alight all night in their houses. And don't you be such a little simpleton again, Nelly. Getting into mischief like a restless ghost, and then arousing a tired fellow from his sleep to undo it."

I can't say but I felt a little vexed at myself : though I was by no means easy about the gas. If this was a nightly occurrence, we might some night find ourselves blown up. But I got to sleep at last.

"It will not be a pleasant task to undeceive the Dunns about their servants," I remarked to Robert in the morning while he was shaving. He turned round, the lather on his chin.

"*Say nothing !* It will not do, Nelly. Never interfere between friends and their servants, wherever you may be."

"But the danger, Robert ! If——"

"For goodness sake, don't be so childish," returned he, in quite an angry tone. "I tell you there's no danger whatever : and your own common sense might show you there's none. You are not going to walk in your sleep, I suppose, and turn these taps on."

At breakfast nothing was said of our not having slept perfectly well all night. Mr. Dunn did not take the meal with us, but came in to say

"Good morning." At his busy seasons—and this was one—he was up and at work before seven, and had his breakfast carried in to him on a tray. His partner had been in ill health a long while, and could not come to business, so that Mr. Dunn had it all on his shoulders.

Robert went out directly; and Mrs. Dunn and her sister took me down stairs to see the house, as promised. The offices on the ground floor were two good rooms, Mr. Dunn's particular room being the back one. At the end of the passage, before descending, was a third room. It appeared to have in it, amongst other things, a sofa-bed, a large table on which stood a desk, an easy-chair, and a red carpet.

"That is Mr. Mowbray's room," said Catherine Massingham, pushing the door wider open as we passed it. "His sitting-room and bed-room combined."

"Who is Mr. Mowbray? His name was mentioned last evening."

"He is the confidential clerk. You will see him on Sunday, when he always dines with us. On other days his meals are served in this room."

The servants kept were two: Jenkins the cook, Ruth the housemaid: the office-boy cleaning knives and boots. Both were respectable looking, capable women of some thirty years: quite too old to play, as Robert phrased it, at high jinks in the stealthy night, and let on the gas when they were supposed to be in bed. The maids' bed-room, large and convenient, was up a passage level with the kitchen. I had no idea they did not sleep up stairs: and of course saw the facility they had for playing tricks with the gas.

There was again some laughing about my ignorance of gas mysteries and Jenkins was called to show me the working of what she called the key—a great twisted iron handle which she put on and off at will, when the "main" had to be turned or unturned. Had it been to save my life, and in spite of Robert's injunction, I could not help putting a home question as we stood there in the coal cellar, with gathered-up skirts, Jenkins twirling the key about, Ruth holding the lighted candle.

"Do you never turn the gas on again at night after it has been turned off?"

"Never," affirmed Jenkins, staring boldly into my face while she said it. "Why should I, ma'am?"

I could not say why—to her. Ruth, a particularly neat person, with blue eyes, and a colour, put in her word:

"It's master's rules to have all gas lights out at half-past ten. We should not think, ma'am, of going again 'em."

The great story-tellers!

"Do you like your servants to sleep down there?" I asked of Mrs. Dunn, when we were up stairs again.

"Yes. Why not?"

"It seems to me they must have so great an opportunity for doing as

they please ; for deceiving you. How are you to know that they don't sit up half the night ? ”

“ We can trust our servants thoroughly, Mrs. Wyatt. They have been with us some years. ”

“ Still—there's the opportunity. ”

“ Oh, of course. Some servants would no doubt misuse it. There are numbers of bad servants in London, quite untrustworthy ; but ours are different. ”

I had pictured Mr. Mowbray as an elderly man—though I hardly know why. When he came up to dinner on Sunday (on that day dinner was taken early, after church) I found him a young one. He could not have been more than eight-and-twenty ; was plain in the face, with a quantity of stiff black hair ; and very shy and silent.

“ Mowbray's manners are nothing, ” whispered Mrs. Dunn to me. “ But for work he's worth his weight in gold. ”

On the Monday night Robert had to see a gentleman at the Tavistock Hotel. It was past eleven when he came in. The gas, kept alight a little longer than usual, waiting for him, was put out at about a quarter to eleven, and two wax candles, taken from the mantel-piece, were lighted. To while away the time, Catherine Massingham said she would tell my fortune.

“ Don't let it be about fire, ” said I, impulsively.

“ Why, what do you mean ? ” she asked.

I turned it off with a laugh. No sooner had she got the cards than Robert came in. The night was very warm for the time of year, April. One of the windows was open, and Robert stretched himself out of it while we finished. It was a poor fortune after all, and did not take many minutes in the telling.

“ What does Mr. Mowbray do with his evenings ? ” I asked of Catherine, the thought suddenly occurring to me as she was putting up the cards.

“ He spends them out always, unless there's work to do : which is very rarely the case. Some club, I believe, he goes to : Mr. Dunn knows. He comes in at ten as regularly as the clock strikes. ”

“ High jinks below to-night, Nelly, ” cried Robert, as he stood winding up his watch in our room.

“ How do you know ? ”

“ Well, when I got home here my cigar was only half smoked out, so I walked about a bit, before the houses, although I was behind time. Rather fantastical, by the way, of Dunn, to go to bed always so punctually early. While I was walking, I saw two gentlemen go down the area steps, and get admittance. ”

“ No ! Gentlemen ? ”

“ Gentlemen in grimy clothes. They looked something like railway stokers. ”

"Why, Robert, the gas was out then!"

"Of course it was. I could see that."

"Who were they, I wonder?"

"Visitors to Ruth and Jenkins."

"What a shame!"

"I wish this room faced the street! I'd watch at what hour my gentlemen take their departure."

"Is that what you were looking from the window at, Robert?"

"Yes."

"And you say we ought not to tell Mr. and Mrs. Dunn?"

"Not a bit of it. Let people find out the good and ill in their servants for themselves, Nelly."

As he spoke he pulled forward the gas-pipe, turned the screw, and applied the match. But without result.

"No gas to-night, at any rate, Nelly."

I had some work to do—clean cuffs and a collar to tack in my morning gown, if anybody's curious on the point—and was not ready for bed till past twelve. Something prompted me to try the gas again the last thing. It blazed up at the touch of the match.

"Robert! Do you see?"

"I see," murmured sleepy Robert from the pillow, just opening his eyes. "High jinks."

But for me, I lay awake half the night, uneasily thinking. I did not like it, and that was the truth.

The matter seemed to lay hold on me. As the nights of the week went on, a nervous sort of fascination, if you can call it so, compelled me to try those gas-lights often, sometimes one, sometimes the other, sometimes both. And I found that they never could be lighted before twelve o'clock, or after two in the morning. So that the servants' revelry continued over those two hours. Robert groaned and scolded, and vowed I should worry myself into fiddlestrings: but he would not hear of anything being said to Mr. and Mrs. Dunn.

On the Saturday, news reached us up stairs that the cook was ill. She had caught a bad cold on her chest, and could hardly, Ruth said, do her work. I recommended some herb tisane that the French take for this, and went down to show them how to make it.

Jenkins sat by the kitchen fire, an old red anti-macassar on her shoulders, and a piece of flannel round her throat. She got up and apologised, but I told her to sit still.

"This cold has been hanging on me all the week," she said. "Last Monday evening, while I was hot with my cooking, I had to run round the street for ale for the up-stairs dinner: our barrel had turned thick. I caught it then."

I looked round at her from the table, where I stood. Monday was the night that Robert had seen the men steal in.

"Caught it on Monday night, did you, Jenkins?"

"If I didn't, ma'am, I don't know when else I did."

"Monday night," said I deliberately—and what impulse it was prompted me to speak, I did not stay to ask. "I remember that night, Jenkins, for quite a curious thing happened to me. You—you turned the gas off at the main as usual that night, did you not?"

"In course I turned it off," replied Jenkins, after a stare and a pause.

"Yes, for I watched it die away out of the drawing-room burners, after Mr. Dunn called out to you. Well, happening to want a light up stairs in my room that night, I lighted one of the burners there, and—and it *did* light."

Ruth, standing by me to watch my fingers, busy with the herbs, stole a quiet glance at Jenkins, and Jenkins stole one back at her. I saw all, never seeming to lift my eyes from the green leaves.

"What a odd thing!" cried Jenkins. "I thought them lights in the spare room was never lighted at all."

"That has nothing to do with it. The strange part is that they should light when there was no gas in the pipes. There could not have been, you know, being turned off at the main."

"I should think, ma'am, you must have been a dreaming!"

The impudence of the woman to say that! It was upon the tip of my tongue to tell her more, but I held it—in time.

"I was not dreaming, I assure you, Jenkins."

"And what time might it have been, ma'am?" asked Ruth.

"Time? After twelve."

"Then I'll vow and declare as there wasn't no gas turned on here at that hour!" cried she as strenuously as her weak chest allowed her to speak. "Gas on here at midnight! What next?"

"Oh, well, Jenkins," I said, afraid of making a storm, and goodness knew what consequences besides, "perhaps I was mistaken."

"And I'm sure you *were*, ma'am," returned Jenkins bluntly. But it did not escape me that Ruth looked just as uneasy as it was possible for a girl to look. And I nearly spoke my thoughts aloud.

"The arch-deceivers!"

That night I told Robert that we *ought* to make it known; that it was a simple duty to do it; but I might just as well have spoken to a post.

"Look here, Nelly. Dunn has enough to worry him just now without being bothered with petty annoyances."

"What has he to worry him, Robert?"

"I don't know," was my husband's answer. "It's something. I happened to tell Dunn he was not looking well, and he then said that he was nearly done up with some private worry that he could not speak of."

Rather strange to say, on the following day, Sunday, we were

destined to hear what this worry was: After supper, we gathered round the large fire—for it was very cold again, quite like winter—and Ruth was told to bring up some hot water and put the wine and spirits on the table. Miss Massingham was away for a day or two; but Mr. Mowbray sat with us. I and my husband had been to the Temple in the morning; and the conversation fell upon the sermon we had heard there, preached by the Master. Its subject had been the troubles of life, and the consolation to be found when suffering from them.

"Well, I don't know what consolation *I* could find, or where to look for it," cried Mr. Dunn, breaking a pause. "And I am sure my troubles just now are heavy enough."

"I suppose yours are business troubles?" remarked my husband. "One cannot apply religion always to them."

"Yes, they are business troubles, Wyatt," he answered, speaking with sharp emphasis. "And if I can't come to the bottom of them, they'll go pretty far towards tormenting me into my grave."

One word brought out another. I do not think he had the least intention of telling us what his troubles were; but he got led on by the excitement of intercourse. It often happens so.

Most lawyers have, I suppose, a kind of speciality: one firm applying itself to one particular branch of business, one to another; and so on. Mr. Dunn's was famed for what he called delicate cases: meaning, as I understood it, cases that required delicate handling and strict secrecy. At the present time he had one such in his hands of vast importance: and his trouble was caused by a system of constant baffling from the other side. Every move he made was checked before, so to say, it could well be made; every bit of information he, by dint of much care and labour, obtained, was no sooner in his possession than it became known to the opposition lawyers, Tinker and Teal. After striving to fathom this inexplicable annoyance for some time, and to parry it in the best way he could, Mr. Dunn, wearied out, mortified, dejected, had come to the inevitable conclusion that he was being betrayed; though how it could be done, or from what quarter, he was at a loss to conceive.

"The thing seems clear enough," spoke Robert too hastily, after listening. "The parties from whom you get your information must hand it equally to the other side."

"No," said Mr. Dunn. "Some of the things that have become known to them are confined to myself absolutely. Not a soul else in the world has had the slightest cognizance of them. The very thoughts of my mind—and I know I am not exaggerating in saying it—have been handed over to Tinker and Teal. Regular tinkers they are, between ourselves: would stoop to any dirty work. Lots of money, though; can bribe away right and left, and *do* do it."

"Why, how can they get at your thoughts?" cried Robert.

"That's the question, Wyatt. My absolutely unbreathed thoughts of course they cannot get at : but they do get them as soon as they are embodied on paper. It is taking rather too much out of me, just now, in the shape of peace."

"I'm sure, the way he tosses and turns about in bed at night, and gets up before it's well morning light, because he can't lie, is enough to throw him into a fever," grumbled Mrs. Dunn, snatching up her gown from the fury of the fire, and putting down over it her watered silk apron.

"I get up because I have work to do, Margaret," said Mr. Dunn.

"And if you don't mind, it will end in a fever," she concluded. "Things have never been like this all the years that we've been married."

"Because affairs have never been like this. Look here, I'll tell you the last move in the drama," continued he ; "and it is puzzling my very wits out of me. On Monday last I drew out a paper, embodying certain information that I had received, elaborating my opinion on it, and the course I thought we ought to pursue. That paper lay locked in my desk, unlooked at, untouched, until Wednesday morning, when our client, for whom we are acting, called. She is a lady, I may as well say. I went over the paper with her, pointed out this, explained that ; for two hours, I should think, she was in my office ; and when she was about to depart, I, before her eyes, *burnt* the paper. It was too valuable to retain. Well, will you believe that yesterday afternoon I became sure, from certain movements of Tinker and Teal, that they have in some way obtained knowledge of the contents of that paper ?"

We sat in silence, at a loss for an answer. Mr. Mowbray, who had his chin on his hand, and his wondering eyes fixed on his master, spoke.

"The thing seems impossible, sir. How do you account for it ?"

"I *can't* account for it," cried Mr. Dunn. "What I say, Mowbray, is, that the thing is totally unaccountable."

"It seems to be one of two things, sir : either the paper you drew out must have been seen, or else the information it contained was supplied to Tinker's people as well as to you."

"To me it seems to be one of two other things," was the retort. "Either my client herself has betrayed counsel, or I must have talked in my sleep."

"Good gracious ! and what if you did talk in your sleep ?" cried Mrs. Dunn, taking the words seriously. "There'd be nobody to hear you but me : and I should be asleep too."

"Just so," said he. "And there's no more likelihood that my client would talk : she has too much at stake. Honestly speaking, I see no practicability of the contents of my parchments and the contents of

my mind getting into Tinker and Teal's office : and yet they do get there."

"Do I understand you that the contents of your parchments get to them?" asked Robert.

"It is the contents of the parchments that do get to them, Wyatt. The case involves fresh memoranda, if not fresh deeds, almost daily ; and Tinker and Teal get to know their substance as quickly as I do myself—or next door to it."

"Who draws out the deeds and the memoranda?"

"I do ; always. I don't even trust Mowbray here with them. The nature of the case is most onerous : almost involving life or death."

"And what becomes of the deeds when drawn?"

"They are left in the private drawer of my desk in my own private room—the back office, you know. The key of the desk is never out of my possession."

"Is it one of those patent locks of world-wide fame that skeletons won't undo?" went on Robert. "I often wish I had got one of them for my official papers over the water!"

"It is only an ordinary lock," said Mr. Dunn. "But there's not a chance of anybody's getting to the desk, though he had a skeleton ; for I am in the room from sunrise to sunset."

"Well, it seems very strange."

"It's more than strange : it's magical."

"And it is very disagreeable," put in the confidential clerk. "I can bear Mr. Dunn out in what he says—that no one can possibly get the chance of tampering with any lock in his private room : but nevertheless it is an unpleasant thing for us all in the office. How was it you never told me of this before, sir?"

"Well, Mowbray, the truth is, I have hated to speak of it. Where was the use, either? You can't fathom it any more than I can."

Mr. Mowbray sat twirling his whiskers and gazing into the fire, as if he were trying to compass it. By the expression of his face it seemed a hopeless task.

"How long has it been going on now?" inquired Robert of Mr. Dunn.

"How long? Oh, for three months. But at first, for some weeks, I only suspected something was wrong : doubted, in short, whether it was or not. Now I know it."

The clock on the mantel-piece chimed half-past ten : our signal for dispersing. Mr. Dunn lighted the bed-candles, rang the bell, and then went to the top of the stairs to call out the nightly order :

"Turn off the gas at the main, Ruth."

And in less than a minute came back the usual answering response : which Mr. Dunn always waited for.

"Jenkins has turned it off, sir."

And we saw the gas in the room die slowly out.

Robert fell asleep as soon as he was in bed. As for me—well, I don't care whether you laugh at my folly or not—I muffled myself in my warm travelling wrapper, and sat still. I meant to see whether the gas was turned on again this night, or not.

Yes. A few minutes after twelve I pulled forward the angular pipe of the one burner, and lighted it. It went flaring aloft in the cold room, and Robert woke up.

"Why, Nelly, what on earth are you doing? Is it to-morrow morning?"

"The gas is turned on again to-night, Robert."

"What if it is? Are you going a journey, pray? That cloak pertains to the boat, doesn't it?"

"Robert, I have all sorts of curious ideas in my mind. I should like to tell them to you. It is not much past twelve o'clock."

"Oh, bother! I say, do you mean to sit up all night?"

"No. Not now I have satisfied myself that the gas is on."

"My belief is, that you are going luny over that gas."

"Listen, Robert. I cannot help thinking those men, that the servants admit, must have something to do with Mr. Dunn's troubles."

"What men?"

"Why, the two you saw. Don't you remember? Stokers, you called them."

"Goose! Do you suppose the men are admitted every night?"

"At any rate, the gas is turned on every night, Robert. Even to-night, Sunday night, it is on, you see. *Why* should they turn it on? What do they want with it?"

For a minute or so he did not answer.

"How should men like those, the servants' cousins or sweethearts, be likely to have anything to do with Mr. Dunn's affairs? I tell you, Nelly, you are turning luny."

"Never mind my lunacy. How can we be sure they have *not* something to do with it?"

"In what way?"

"By getting into the office and stealing the deeds: and then—perhaps—selling them to Tinker and Teal. Mr. Dunn says the lock to his private drawer is only an ordinary lock."

"To begin with, the deeds are not stolen. He does not speak of ever having lost one. Come, go on, Nelly the wise."

Well, that was true; and it rather checked me. No deeds had been taken. So far as Mr. Dunn could judge, from the position in which he left them and found them, they were never touched.

"Well, Robert, I can't pretend to solve the mystery. But this may be a clue to it. Possibly the men get to *read* the memoranda and

parchments, and then repeat the substance to Tinker and Teal. Were I you, I should most certainly impart this affair of the gas to Mr. and Mrs. Dunn : they can follow it up if they think proper. Suppose, after we get home again, we should hear of this house being burnt down ! You would reproach yourself then for keeping silence."

"You get to bed and to sleep, Mrs. Wyatt; and don't chatter nonsense."

After this, I was surprised the next morning to find that Robert did mean to tell Mr. Dunn. He lost no time over it, either; for he spoke after breakfast, going down to Mr. Dunn's office to do it. Mr. Dunn came up at once and told his wife.

Nothing could exceed their astonishment. They had so fully believed the servants were trustworthy. "I'll have it out at once," said Mr. Dunn, who was of a hasty temper in small matters.

Both the women were summoned—Ruth from her beds above, Jenkins from below; and the dining-room door was shut upon us. I stated, at Mr. Dunn's request, what I had observed in regard to the gas: namely, that it was re-turned on again every night after everybody was supposed to be in bed and asleep.

Stolidly, obstinately, defiantly, as if resenting the implied accusation, Jenkins vowed by all the saints in the calendar that they never did return on the gas after her master had called out his orders to put it out. She and Ruth were too tired with the labours of the day not to be glad enough to get at once to bed. Especially now when there was company in the house, she added, as a fling at me. Ruth, looking very pale, bore her out. And, but for knowing what I did know, I should have thought they were asserting the truth.

Then Mr. Dunn spoke of the two men who had come in surreptitiously the previous Monday night. Jenkins answered at once.

"*That's* true," she said. "My two brothers, Jim and Jacob, came to tell me of two things: one bad, the other good. Jim's little son had been that day run over by a train at the Liverpool station, and was left lying there in the hospital. He wanted to borrow a pound from me for things for the child. The other news was that he, Jim, was promoted to be a driver, and would get better pay. Jacob must work on as a stoker yet: but his turn'll come."

Robert gave me a look. He had made a good guess at the men's callings. Mrs. Dunn spoke.

"Very late, Jenkins, I must say, to have visitors."

"They came on to me as soon as Jim's train was in, ma'am. That there Liverpool train don't get up till between ten and eleven. Me and Ruth couldn't imagine who it was, a coming down the airy at that hour. It was a good six months since I had seen Jim before."

"And did you turn on the gas, Jenkins?" questioned her master.

"Yes, sir, I did. The kitchen's like a well without it, for darkness."

I knew there was no danger, as all the burners ever lighted be all turned off carefully. We kept it alight a matter of ten or twelve minutes; not more: before the clock struck eleven they had gone away again."

"And you put the gas out again at the main?"

"Of course I did, sir. I turned it off at once. That is the only time we have ever had the gas on again," concluded Jenkins, emphatically; "and if it was the last word I ever had to speak, I'd say it."

"You have never turned it on any other night at all?"

"No, sir, never. There's Ruth: she can speak to it as well as me."

Ruth seemed hardly in a condition to speak to anything. She was dissolved in tears.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wyatt both say that the burners in their room can be lighted every night after twelve o'clock," said Mr. Dunn. "They have been in the habit of trying it."

"The gas don't come from our main then," retorted Jenkins. "Me and Ruth is abed and asleep ages afore that. Perhaps them burners in the spare room have got a main of their own," she concluded with some suppressed insolence.

Well, there seemed nothing satisfactory to be drawn from it. Jenkins and Ruth held to what they said, and were allowed to retire. Mrs. Dunn believed them; I saw that plainly; and she disbelieved me. Afterwards she hinted that I must be in some way mistaken.

The usual routine was gone through that night—"Ruth, turn off the gas at the main,"—and we went up to bed as usual. Robert got a book.

"Don't you mean to undress, Robert?"

"Not yet; I'm waiting for twelve o'clock and the gas. If it lights up to-night, as ordinary, Dunn and I are going on an exploring expedition."

"Where to?"

"To every room in the house. There must be treachery somewhere."

"It must lie with the servants, Robert—in spite of their denial."

"Well, that's the only conclusion Dunn and I can come to. And for that reason, I have not the least expectation that there'll be any superfluous gas to-night, after the exposé. You can go to bed, Nelly."

"Oh, Robert, no! I must stay up, to see."

But there *was* gas. A few minutes after twelve, Robert tried the two burners and they flared up. Treading lightly in his soft slippers, he went to Mr. Dunn's door and brought him in.

"You see, Dunn. There's the gas as large as life."

"By George!" cried Mr. Dunn.

They went creeping down stairs in their stockings, intending to pounce upon Ruth and Jenkins. Mrs. Dunn and I stretched ourselves over the balustrades to listen—for she had not undressed either. In

passing the offices to steal round to the lowest flight of stairs, Robert, as he told us later, saw a light glimmering under the door of Mr. Dunn's private room. Catching his arm, he pointed to it silently.

"We must go in," whispered Robert. "And force the door, if necessary."

The door was bolted; but they did force it: they were both powerful men. Seated at Mr. Dunn's desk, underneath the gas burners, all three alight, was Mr. Mowbray. He had the private drawer open, and was copying some freshly drawn-up document of importance.

He was the culprit. Though, as Mr. Dunn said afterwards, he would sooner have suspected himself. Mr. Mowbray had got into some dreadful embarrassment of debt; and, to try and extricate himself was turning traitor to his master and selling his treachery to Tinker and Teal. After the servants had got well to bed he had been wont to steal down to the coal cellar and turn on the gas at the main.

Mr. Dunn did not prosecute him; only sent him adrift. He was a soft-hearted man at all times, and the clerk told him a piteous tale. Robert laughed: it was, he said, Dunn all over.

And Jenkins and Ruth had been as innocent all through as we were. I gave them a gown a-piece when I left.

But I don't like gas in a house yet. I tell Robert we will not have it in ours, at least in the bedrooms, if ever we get the chance of coming home to dear old England.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

'A tea-rose of exquisite tint and sweetness.'